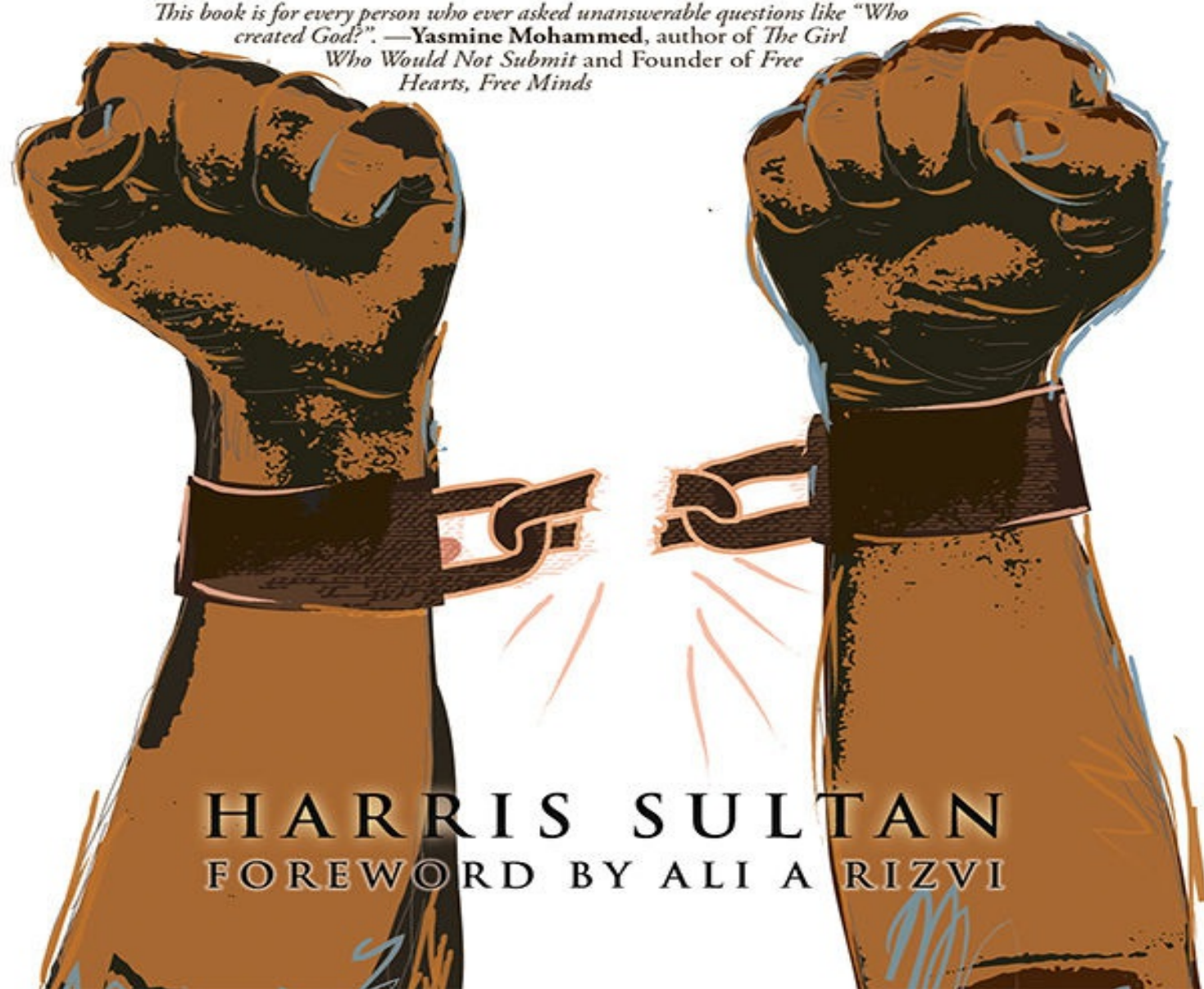


The CURSE of GOD

WHY I LEFT ISLAM

This book is for every person who ever asked unanswerable questions like "Who created God?". —Yasmine Mohammed, author of The Girl Who Would Not Submit and Founder of Free Hearts, Free Minds



HARRIS SULTAN
FOREWORD BY ALI A RIZVI

“In this searingly honest account, Harris does not attempt to answer these questions for you, but he does, unequivocally, assert that the answers you were given were lies. “The Curse of God” outlines how this lie has plagued humanity for way too many years. It’s time we dispel with these dangerous myths and start to focus our energies on each other instead of on imaginary friends in the sky.”

—**Yasmine Mohammed**, author of *The Girl Who Would Not Submit*
and Founder of *Free Hearts, Free Minds*

THE CURSE OF
GOD
WHY I LEFT ISLAM

HARRIS SULTAN

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FOREWORD FOR THE CURSE OF GOD by Ali A. Rizvi

We have all heard of lapsed Catholics from magazine articles and stand-up comedians. In the Jewish community, secular Jews are almost the default. Former Hasidics are featured in award-winning Netflix documentaries. Ex-Scientologists frequently score lucrative book and TV deals.

What, then, of the ex-Muslim? Is it really reasonable to assume that the world's second largest religious community – numbering over 1.6 billion – is the only one that hasn't produced any significant number of freethinking individuals who favour reason over faith, and morality over piety?

Of course it isn't. Yet while lapsed Catholics, ex-Hasidics, and ex-Scientologists are embraced – even celebrated – ex-Muslims are somehow dismissed as a fringe faction, as Islamophobic 'native informants', or as self-hating traitors who are party to the demonisation of Muslims by the anti-Muslim populist far-right.

This, dear readers, is bigotry. It assumes that Muslims are uniquely unable to tolerate dissent, satire or even dialogue. This book, then, is much more than just a riveting account of why a once-believing young Muslim man lost his faith in pursuit of truth and moral consistency; it is also an *opportunity* for Muslims to engage in the kind of dialogue they are widely thought to be incapable of.

All of us who live in liberal Western democracies are beneficiaries of the Age of Enlightenment. Our fundamental values and rights – of free expression, individual liberty, equal rights and democracy – are the result of courageous freethinkers who challenged the European theocracies and religious orthodoxies of their time. So brutal and powerful were these regimes that they make today's Islamic State look like amateurs.

Thomas Jefferson, who incorporated these enlightenment ideals into the U.S. Declaration of Independence, is famously known to have taken a razor blade to the Bible, stripping it of all supernatural claims and superstition. Rather than building a nation on the basis of ‘Judeo-Christian values’, as some erroneously claim, America’s founding fathers did quite the opposite: they founded their nation as a deviation from Judeo-Christian values. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution throws up a wall between religion and state, while guaranteeing free speech and free expression.

Today, this Age of Enlightenment is dawning again – in the Muslim world.

Like Voltaire, Rousseau and Jefferson, countless young men and women across the world’s Muslim communities are openly questioning the religion of their parents and organising as they never could before. Just as the advent of the printing press opened up the contents of a once-opaque Bible to the average person, the Internet has made the contents of the Quran transparent to any pre-adolescent child with basic Google skills. When I grew up in the 1980s, we had a Quran on the top of a bookshelf in the living room. It was in a language we didn’t understand, and it could not be touched, much less opened or read, without a purification ritual called *wudhu*. Most Muslims, while revering the book as sacred, had no more than a vague familiarity with its contents. For those of us who did wish to read and understand it, finding all of the verses related to a certain topic took hours of perusal and bookmarking, preferably of a translation that was acceptable to most Muslims (most weren’t). In contrast, today children can conduct keyword searches of the entire Quran by topic, compare dozens of translations side by side, delve into etymology, grammar and syntax, and share everything they’ve learned with their friends – in minutes.

Why don’t we hear about it then? The answer to this question is as simple as it is unfortunate. The few who have dared to speak out in Muslim-majority countries have had to bear dire consequences. My friend Raif Badawi continues to be imprisoned in Saudi Arabia, separated from his wife and children for over six years as of this writing. His crime? Blogging about the

separation of religion and state in his country. The charge? ‘Insulting Islam.’ Secular bloggers like Avijit Roy in Bangladesh have been hacked to death with machetes in broad daylight for writing a book challenging religion and promoting science and rationality. Iran executed the 37-year-old Mohsen Amir Aslani in 2014 for questioning the story of Jonah (Yunus in the Quran) and the big fish he allegedly lived in. Mashal Khan was lynched to death by a mob of university students – yes, university students, who killed him openly *on campus* – for, among other things, asking questions about Adam and Eve. This is just a superficial sampling of the people who have stepped up to speak openly. There are many more we never hear of. And there are still more that don’t bother speaking up in the first place. You may now understand why. Thirteen countries in the world currently punish atheism with death. All are Muslim-majority. Even in countries where the government doesn’t get you, the mob will.

Recently, Muslim governments have begun to crack down harder on the non-believers in their populations. Saudi Arabia has declared atheism to be a terrorist offense. Malaysia has announced its intention to actively hunt down atheists. Pakistan is doubling down on its blasphemy laws, trying to get everyone, from the UN to YouTube, to support them. Similar crackdowns are underway in Iran and Egypt.

This sounds like bad news – until you ask yourself why.

Why the crackdown? Why the desperation?

It is in the answer to these questions that one finds encouragement: apostasy is on the rise in unprecedented numbers in the Muslim world. In this book, you will read about these numbers, which – as eye-opening as they may be – are almost certainly under-reported because of the dire risks and consequences involved. Even in the United States, a recent Pew Research poll found that almost a quarter of children born to American Muslim families no longer identify with the faith. To the outsider, this may not be hard to believe since it is consistent with the increasingly large numbers of youth leaving religion in general. However, for Muslims, it is undoubtedly

new.

Both the left and the right get it wrong when it comes to Islam and Muslims. For many on the left, any criticism of Islam is seen as bigotry against all Muslims; for many on the right, problematic parts of Islamic doctrine are assumed to be the beliefs of all Muslims. Both sides make one key mistake: they conflate ‘Islam’, which is a set of ideas, with ‘Muslims’, who are living, breathing people. Islam can be challenged and criticised, because ideas and books don’t have rights and protections. Muslims should not be demonised or discriminated against, because human beings do have rights and protections. Challenging ideas moves societies forward. Demonising people rips societies apart.

In *The Curse of God*, Harris Sultan deftly strikes this balance with intelligence, honesty and compassion. His criticism of Islam, the faith of his ancestors, is scathing and unapologetic, yet rooted in dispassionate and thoroughly researched reasoning. This book will help questioning Muslims realise they are not alone in their doubts. It will help the Muslim parents of sceptical children understand that their choices are not an affront to their upbringing but an attempt to live a life that is morally consistent and free of cognitive dissonance. It will help far-left apologetics understand that diversity doesn’t just occur between groups, but also among the individuals within them. It will help far-right identitarians understand that the Muslim world isn’t monolithic, but also contains within it millions of dissidents, freethinkers and secularists who value freedom over authoritarianism.

When freethinkers in Europe challenged Christianity, we called it the Age of Enlightenment, and we benefit from it to this day. Now that freethinkers in the Muslim world are risking their lives and livelihoods to challenge Islam, it would be an injustice to call it anything else.

—Ali A. Rizvi

Introduction

I am *not* anti-religion; I am anti-misogyny, anti-slavery, anti-sexism, anti-violence, anti-ignorance, anti-child abuse, anti-oppression, and anti-war. Religion is anti-me.

It is likely that when this book is published, I will have a fatwa or two on my life, possibly by the tyrant regime of Iran, the Taliban of Pakistan, or worse, one of the ISIS agents in Australia. The threat of Hizb ut-Tahrir's extremism is always present in Australia. However, this will not stop people like me from lifting the curtain off what is a seemingly peaceful and harmless organised religion, specifically Islam. The purpose of this book is not to offend the followers of any particular religion but to educate people on how to think about religion. You might assume that even religious apologists would not object to learning how to think rather than being told what to think. But even though they will not disagree with it openly, they will still encourage people to blindly follow scriptures written by men thousands of years ago. Obviously, I am not suggesting that we shouldn't pay any attention to thinkers or philosophers from thousands of years ago, but we should always consider new information with an open mind and be able to question the teachings no matter who wrote them or when.

This book is not written to discuss the lack of possibility of existence of any particular god but of *all* gods, whether Zeus or Yahweh, Vishnu or Allah. Although most of the references in this book will be in relation to Allah or the Islamic God, it is not my intention to condemn only Allah. The reason why Allah is mentioned before any other god is simply because that is the religion I'm the most familiar with.

Although I started questioning the plausibility of Islam from the age of 9 or 10, I had not begun to denounce religion altogether until I read alternative ideas and counter-arguments against traditional religious arguments. It would

be a blatant lie to say that only one book changed my mind, but I must mention Prof Richard Dawkins, who inspired me to think outside the religious box. It was a rather long and painful journey coming out of the fairy tale–like, magical world of religion and into the wonderful world that the sciences have introduced to us. I must admit that although it was painful, I am glad I went this way, thinking independently rather than being told what to think. I am thankful to the hundreds of educators out there who wholeheartedly and tirelessly spend their lives telling people that there is an alternative to religion. Science is an alternative that gives us answers rather than mystifying the natural world and natural processes that religion has told us not to think about. It answers questions such as how the world came into being or how life evolved on our planet. Religion tells us that God created everything without telling us ‘how’. This assertion leaves us with an even bigger problem: who created God? Obviously, religion has no credible answer, at least no answer that doesn’t just give rise to further questions without answers.

It is the aim of this book to reach out to moderate religious people, especially Muslims, who listen to music or wonder what is so wrong about falling in love with a fellow human being outside of wedlock, people who don’t agree with stoning adulterers to death or chopping the hands off thieves, etc. Some Western readers might think that I will not have a large audience as not a lot of Muslims think like that, but let me assure you – there are far more moderate Muslims than religious nuts like the Taliban or Hezbollah; I know this is the case at least in Pakistan. As I was raised in Pakistan, most of the views will be narrowed down to Pakistani Muslims and Islam; however, I must state again that this book is not only about Muslims or Pakistani Muslims. It is for all the people who ask if the stories about gods and angels are lies. It is for Muslims who like to explore the world and sing songs, listen to music, those who might be homosexual, who enjoy movies and appreciate paintings depicting other humans or animals, those who might want to treat women equally, who might want to slaughter animals humanely, etc. Yes, let me surprise you; all these ‘acts’ are actually prohibited by various sects of

Islam.

We have thousands of Muslim musicians, actors, actresses, and activists who stand against inhumane systems such as Sharia, who advocate for the freedom of women and animal rights, etc., not to mention millions more who actually support and idolise these musicians, artists, and activists. These include some great Muslim thinkers and even scientists, such as the only Muslim Nobel Prize winner in physics, Prof Abdus Salam, famous cricketer and now Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan, Mahathir Muhammad of Malaysia, Pervez Musharraf, and many more. I admire all these people for some of the great work they have achieved for humanity instead of glorifying Allah, but I give credit for their efforts to them only. I don't expect them to change their way of thinking.

This book is written for those Muslims who unknowingly disagree with the values that are fundamentals of Islam. My message to all these in-between Muslims is to either denounce Islam altogether (since you disagree with its values) or become like the Taliban or ISIS since they are the true followers of Muhammad's Islam. It may seem harsh, but the true Islam is actually the Islam of the Taliban and ISIS, and by living a double life, I am certain, if there was a God, he would not be happy with you for accepting some of his ideas and ignoring the rest.

Lastly, the real audience of this book is the Muslim women who are being abused by this religion. I cannot comprehend the sorrow and sense of powerlessness a woman has every day in a male-dominated religion. Any sane person understands how important women are in producing the society of not only today but also of tomorrow, yet women are treated as if their sole purpose is to produce babies and serve their men. I would like to reach out to those women who are being abused and discriminated against by their husbands, brothers, or fathers and encourage and empower them to raise children who will be like anything but those husbands, brothers, or fathers.

Why Write This Book?

People like us don't criticise religion just because it's a lie; we do it because it is a very dangerous lie. We don't get a kick out of destroying myths that are so dear to a large part of the human population; we are forced to do it because of the dangers these myths bring to another large part of human civilisation.

The biggest motivation to write this book came from my knowledge of the rising number of atheists in Muslim communities. Even though I had been an atheist for over ten years, I was somewhat sceptical towards the rise of atheism in the Muslim world. I always had a strong intuition that there were atheists in Pakistan, but I had no idea about the number. To find out more, I started a Facebook page to interact with some ex-Muslim atheists. Within weeks, I started getting thousands of likes from Indian and Pakistani Muslims, Hindus, and atheists. I was contacted by thousands of angry Muslims wishing death on me, but I was also contacted by thousands of ex-Muslims living in Pakistan in total fear for their lives. How can I keep quiet when I know there are thousands of people like me in a country I once called home, being persecuted, discriminated against, and having their most basic of human rights violated?

You all would have heard that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. It is, but mainly because of high reproduction rates rather than adult conversions. There is no evidence to suggest that the number of adults converting to Islam is higher than the number of adults leaving it.

Let's look at the rising number of atheists in some Muslim countries:

Country	Difference		Total Current Number (in millions) 80
Pakistan	+1% in 2001	+2% in 2012	4 Million
Turkey	+6% in 2013	+9.4% in 2015	4.8 Million
Malaysia	N/A	+6% in 2012	1.8 Million
Saudi Arabia	N/A	+5% in 2012	1.6 Million
Total Number of Atheists			12.9 Million 116

I figure the number could be much higher than the ones reflected in this Gallup index of 2012 as atheism is a taboo with serious consequences in the Muslim world. Moreover, there are a lot more Muslim countries than the ones mentioned in the above table, so you can easily assume the number of atheists in predominantly Muslim countries is far greater than thirteen million.

It is absolutely imperative for people like me to raise our voices against the barbarity of the religious establishment. We are simply asking you to stop killing us just because we no longer believe in your fairy tales. Even making this request offends this religious establishment so much that they are happy to issue fatwas for our deaths. History has shown us the only way to destroy taboos is to talk about them openly, hence this book and many others from writers like me.

We have to keep ridiculing and offending subscribers to bad ideas. As a result of the ridicule of the last ten years, Saudi Arabia has now allowed women to drive, yet since 2013, forty-eight secularists and atheist bloggers have been killed by Islamists in Bangladesh alone for ‘offending’ religious groups. We have to keep ridiculing the Islamic establishment for killing apostates so that they stop killing them. Unfortunately, some of us might die in the process, but that is no reason to stop fighting for it. In 2017, Mashal Khan made news all over the world as he was lynched and brutally murdered by an Islamist mob for ‘blasphemous’ Facebook posts. Pakistani authorities arrested Ayaz Nizami, a Facebook blogger in early 2017, and as of 29th of August 2018, we have no idea about his fate. He is also accused of blasphemy and, if convicted, could receive the death penalty. Because of these incidents, atheists live in constant fear in these countries and are reluctant to come out. On my Facebook page, most of these atheists from Muslim countries have created fake Facebook profiles to avoid being targeted by the authorities. This has to stop. Writing this book is one small effort to achieve that goal.

Why Did I Leave Islam?

This is a question I get asked by a lot of people: Why did I leave Islam? At what point did I decide that it was over? The answer is not very simple as there was no single moment when my belief in Islam – and later God in general – was eradicated.

I was born in Lahore, Pakistan, in a Muslim household; my whole family is still Muslim, and they love their religion. But I was a little different. I had questions. As a kid, I asked other kids questions, but they either didn't know the answers or simply had no interest in finding them. I remember around the age of 9 or 10, I asked my mother who created everything, and when she said Allah did, I asked who created Allah; she had no answer.

My mother, despite my atheism, still loves me and did not want me to write this book. She could not convince me why I shouldn't write it. 'Someone will kill you' was simply not a good-enough reason.

I grew up as a Muslim, went to the mosque for the Jumma (Friday) prayers, and read the Quran in Arabic as per the tradition, but a lot of things still didn't make sense. As I was growing up in Pakistan in the '90s, the Internet was still new, and answers were not easily found, so it was frustrating. There came a point in my life when 'God did it' no longer made sense to me.

To try to understand the validity of Islam or any other religion, I asked three questions:

1. Is there any evidence in favour of this God?
2. Is the morality depicted in this religion good?
3. Is the science in this religion correct?

I will note here that I would be dishonest if I said that I could do this all myself. Books like *The God Delusion* helped me a lot to understand the other side of the argument.

These three questions led me away from Islam, but what about other gods?

The gods of Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, the ancient Romans or Greeks, or a thousand other gods that people have died worshipping? After all, they would all claim that their religion passes all three questions. I did not study every religion in as much detail as Islam, but I could answer questions about the character of God in general as almost all gods have similar traits to those of the Islamic or Abrahamic God. My frustrations with each religion could be summarised by the following thoughts:

1. Why is the creator of billions of galaxies so obsessed with what we tiny humans do in our private lives? He gets angry if we sleep with someone of our own gender. He gets angry if we do not have a ceremony before we sleep with someone. If we do not worship him, he gets so angry that he will torture his own creations in hell for eternity. Why does he need worshipping? It made me think that the creator of billions and billions of galaxies has the temperament of a child; if I tell a child that he cannot have candy, he will start screaming and crying until he gets his own way. This is very similar to all these gods – ‘Worship me, or I will burn you in hell forever!’

2. Why does this God, who wants us to believe in him blindly, show no evidence of his existence? He could reveal himself right now in front of the White House and end all wars. He could show up today and say, ‘Hey, this is who I am. This is what my name is, and I want you to do this and this.’ *End of story*. But he wants to hide himself, and then he wants to blame us for not believing in him? Muslims and apologists of other faiths say, ‘Well, our God sent his message thousands of years ago,’ which begs another question: why did the Abrahamic God send all his messages to a tiny part of the Middle East? What about people who did not get his message on the other side of the planet, say, Australia or the Americas? They did not know about Muhammad or any other Middle Eastern god until they were discovered in the fifteenth century and later. Just imagine the millions of people who were born and died at that time in those continents, completely oblivious of these Abrahamic gods, burning in hell simply because they were born in the wrong geographical area.

3. Muslims claim that humans contaminated previous scriptures like the Torah and Bible. Wouldn't the creator of everything know that if he sends a prophet, like Jesus or Moses, their messages would be contaminated by other people and his message would be lost?? If he knew, then what does this mean for all the Jews and Christians born after the Torah and Bible were contaminated? They lived and died believing in their scriptures, but if they were contaminated by their forefathers, how were they meant to know this?

Muslims love to say that the Quran is not contaminated, but even if this was true, I think it is worse than contamination that every sect of Islam has its own interpretation, Sunnis say that they are right, while Shias believe they are right. This means that the Quran is easily misunderstood, poorly written, or even just full of nonsense. There are verses in the Quran that are easily misunderstood; to this day, Muslims loosely quote verses like this as evidence of the Big Bang:

Do those who are disbelievers not see that the heavens and the earth were sewn together and then We unstitched them and that We made from water every living thing? So will they not have faith? (21:30)

I will explain the errors of this verse in a later chapter, but this begs a philosophical question: if these verses were scientifically correct, then how come no Muslim ever came up with a theory like the Big Bang? Again, it means either it is not written properly and therefore easily misunderstood or there is no Big Bang mentioned in the verse; I believe the latter.

4. And the prayer! Every religious person thinks they have a special hotline to their God. When they get something, they think it's because of prayer. If they don't get it, then they think that Allah didn't want it. One and a half billion Muslims pray to Allah, but what about the other five and a half billion people? They are obviously praying to the wrong God; how come they seem to live their lives perfectly happy? Religious people also think that sometimes their prayers get answered and sometimes not. Clearly, there is something wrong here. Let's do an experiment: if you want something, just pray to Allah and see if you get it. Or you could not pray to Allah and just work hard

to get it. See which one works. Obviously, it works for the five and a half billion people on Earth who have become billionaires, liberated countries, saved the lives of millions of people, won wars, created better systems of government, and discovered the secrets of the universe. Muslims will say, 'Well, you still have to work hard, but you have to pray as well.' Well, if you have to work hard to get something, what is the point of praying?

A lot of people ask me why I don't just keep my atheist views to myself. The answer is very simple: I live a free life, free of fear of hell or any other baggage that comes with religion. I enjoy my life, and it's great to be alive. I can drink alcohol, I am not forced to hate homosexuals, I don't have to think that women are subservient or inferior to men, I don't have to think that animals were created by God to serve us, I can enjoy any music, I don't have to hate people of other religions, and I can enjoy paintings and other works of art. All this baggage goes away if you become an atheist, and the world starts becoming a better place, so people like me like to spread the message and these counter-arguments. Asking an ex-Muslim not to talk about Islam after they have left it is like asking an ex-drug addict not to talk about the dangers of drugs after they are rehabilitated. Why do Muslims think that they can preach their beliefs to others but no one else can? If your answer is 'Well, we are right', then I'm sorry to say you are wrong.

My name is Harris Sultan, and I don't believe in your gods.

CHAPTER 1

The Art of Thinking

The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.

— Albert Einstein

Why do we read books or watch documentaries? Of course, it's for many reasons, such as amusement, entertainment, and motivation, but to me, the most important thing is knowledge. The beauty of human civilisation is that our entire society is based on collective knowledge. No one man or a woman has ownership over knowledge of the cosmos or biology or art; it is all the result of the continuing efforts of our fellow humans to enhance our existing knowledge.

I personally know many people who justify *not* enhancing their knowledge because they claim that they already have a book, such as the Quran or Bible, that has given them enough knowledge to live a perfect life. There is a major problem with this attitude as these people enjoy the modern facilities made available by people who *have* enhanced their knowledge by not reading the Quran. Does the Quran explain how open-heart surgery is performed? Does the Bible tell us how to build a rocket so we can go to the moon and beyond? Of course not. The world we live in today is here because of the efforts of millions of people who have worked hard and contributed to the collective knowledge of human civilisation to the best of their abilities. I'm not suggesting that you have to learn everything mankind has to offer as we are all ignorant in one way or another, but we should all strive to learn more. We are constantly thriving to enhance our knowledge of the world around us, but this stops the moment your attitude changes to 'I have the Quran, so I don't need to learn anything else'. The point I am trying to make is that we are all

ignorant, but we should never stop trying to enhance our knowledge.

This book requires its readers to have an open mind and leave their biased, preconceived ideas and opinions at the door. Throughout the book, you will come across arguments that oppose your own ways of thinking, and you will want to put it down. This is certainly *not* a way of reading any book. I expect my readers to read and understand the conclusions I present. As you come across an argument, you have two options:

- A) you can read the argument and its premise and conclusion and, without thinking critically, accept it because you already believe it or reject as it directly contradicts the views you hold; or
- B) you can read the argument, understand the premise, and assume the conclusion achieved is correct, test/question the conclusion using your critical sense, and then come to your conclusion, i.e. approving or rejecting it.

I expect my readers to adopt method B while they read this book. I can understand how hard and frustrating it can be to listen to ideas that violate the beliefs you have held throughout your life, but one should ask the question ‘Do I really want to be an intolerant, impatient, and arrogant human being? Do I really want to be a person who holds a certain view and does not want anyone to question or speak about it?’ Unless you are a member of ISIS or the Taliban, I am certain your answer will be no. I don’t expect you to simply believe what I am telling you either; in fact, I encourage you to read this book with a neutral mind and pick any argument raised in this book and then use your *critical sense* and question it.

Critical sense is the opposite of common sense. Although common sense is a good way of looking at things, critical sense is even more important. Critical sense is thinking critically of any explanation given to you. Critical sense is more important than common sense as common sense only operates on existing knowledge. Common sense implies that the knowledge that we have today is the absolute truth, but as the natural world is loaded with tons of phenomena we don’t understand, common sense applied on those unknown

phenomena is pointless.

For example, there was a time when we believed that Earth was flat, so it was common sense not to travel to the end of the world as we would fall to our deaths. The critical thinkers of that time saw some problems with this idea and came to the conclusion that Earth is actually round. Clearly, common sense did not do any justice to the absolute truth. In this case, people searched for the evidence and came to the conclusion that Earth was indeed round. The evidence they gathered was enough to eventually convince other people as well, and now a round Earth is common sense.

To emphasise the importance of method B over method A, let us assume we are in ancient Greece in the sixth century BC, when the idea of a flat Earth was very popular. We shall now look at both hypotheses, one at a time, and use our critical sense to find the truth.

Hypothesis 1: Earth is flat since it appears flat.

Method A thinking accepts this hypothesis straight away without any further scepticism. However, method B demands that we assume that the theory is correct but still question and look for evidence. For example, why have the humans who have travelled farthest never come across a point where there is a sheer drop off the edge of Earth? Let's address two possible reasons:

- A) Earth has no edge, and it keeps on going forever; or
- B) no explorer has reached the edge, or those who have never made it back because they all fell to their deaths.

We can rule out the first possibility as we can see the sun set and rise the next day, so no matter how large Earth is, the sun goes around it, so it cannot be infinitely large. The other possibility to defend this position could be that the sun takes a dip in the Western ocean but that doesn't explain why it would come out from the Eastern ocean. This possibility was never really popular.

We shall now focus on the second possibility. Keeping all the exploration people have undertaken in mind, it would be safe to assume that there may be

no such point. Obviously, this supposition isn't the absolute truth, but it does bring us closer, making us doubt the hypothesis. To get even closer to the truth, we can carry out a simple experiment by standing on a high cliff on the beach and observing approaching ships. When we see a ship in the distance, we can see that the highest point of the ship becomes visible first, and as it approaches, we start seeing the rest of the ship. If Earth was flat, the entire ship should become visible at once, but this is not what happens.

Also, people have been observing lunar eclipses for thousands of years, and according to one school of thought, it was the lunar eclipse that made people question whether Earth is flat or not. Lunar eclipses happen when Earth gets between the sun and the moon and casts its shadow on the moon. If you have a look at your own shadow, you can get a pretty good idea of your shape. Consider this image below, taken during the August 2010 lunar eclipse; you can clearly see the shadow of Earth on the moon and see the edge of the shadow is like an arc, clearly revealing the shape of Earth.



Furthermore, we can send multiple exploratory missions with enough food and water supplies to last them for months or even up to a year in the sea. If they sail to the east and return from the west, then it would mean that Earth is not flat. In fact, this is how it was proven by Ferdinand Magellan and Juan Sebastián Elcano in 1519–1522. If you need to see the evidence with your own eyes, you aren't alone. Some people are determined to see this for themselves, like American flat-Earther Mike Hughes, who, at the time of writing this book, is attempting to send himself 1,800 feet in a homemade rocket to see if there is a curvature of Earth or not. At 1,800 feet (which is barely 550 metres; there are taller buildings), he is unlikely to see any curvature. Last time I checked, his local government had stopped him from doing it for safety reasons.

So if we feel we have begun to doubt that Earth is flat, it stands to reason now to test our new hypothesis: that Earth is round.

Hypothesis 2: Earth is round just like all the heavenly bodies we can see in the sky.

To test this hypothesis, we shall now assume that it is correct and ask questions. If Earth is round, then why does it appear flat? Imagine you were walking on the surface of another planet; would it appear flat like it does on Earth, or would it be visibly round? Let's try a thought experiment: if you assume that the sun is huge as compared to our body size, then the answer is obvious that it would appear flat. What if we ask what Earth would look like if it was round? Would it look flat, or would it have felt like walking on a big ball? You can now start increasing the size of the ball you are walking on, and you will notice that larger the ball gets, the flatter it feels as you walk on it. If this thought experiment doesn't work for you, you could conduct the same physical experiment we conducted when we were testing the first hypothesis: if Earth is round, then the ships setting off in the east would come back from the west. Since this is what happened, we can agree with our hypothesis that Earth is round. Hopefully, I demonstrated how we should test a theory, a hypothesis, or even an argument by choosing method B.

Of course, some absolute truths are a lot harder to find than finding out whether Earth is flat or round. For example, our current knowledge doesn't tell us what happened before the Big Bang, and philosophically, we run into a lot of problems with almost all the theories. Although we have determined some absolute truths, there are even more yet to find.

Since we cannot disprove god(s) created our universe with absolute certainty, I will not make claims that there is no god whatsoever, but the book will cover various arguments that will argue that our gods (theistic gods) almost certainly do not exist. I must admit it is impossible to disprove a super-being who created the entire universe (a deistic god), but I feel strongly that this super-being has not yet been described by any known religion. Their creator sounds very small, egoistic, angry, and very unscientific, whereas the deity that may have created the universe must be very grand and above all feelings such as anger, happiness, sadness, vengefulness, etc. and doesn't need validation from the humans it created. Just like the thought experiment earlier didn't give us a conclusive answer but supported one side of the discussion more than the other, various thought experiments and arguments in this book will suggest that the gods humanity has introduced are far from any real god. Just because we cannot completely disprove God, this is not any evidence that gods exist, and since we cannot disprove God, no matter how improbable, we cannot rule out God's existence completely.

However, we can absolutely disprove the gods that human minds have conceived of so far by studying religions using method B. If we study religions with open minds, it is easy to start seeing the cracks that appear early in the study. Most of this book will present arguments going against the traditional gods created by mankind's wild imaginations, such as Apollo, Zeus, Yahweh, Allah, etc., but it will also highlight the improbability of the deistic God, a god who created the entire universe but does not interfere in the petty business of humans or any other species living on other planets. Simply put, the deistic God created the universe and then left it. I must admit it is much harder to disprove a deistic god than the popular gods who supposedly interfere every day and listen to our prayers, but the gods we're

concerned with are the ones people are fighting wars over. These gods are definitely theistic and not deistic gods.

Change of Mind

Religious apologists, especially Muslim apologists, love to say, ‘You atheists are always changing as science is always changing, but we have our book that doesn’t change, so we are consistent in our beliefs.’ It is true that we change our minds in light of better evidence and reason, but this is a good thing that works in our favour. With the word of God, once you have pointed out the flaws in it, you can’t change it, and you are stuck with the flawed ideas. Any sane person, in light of better evidence and reason, would change, but instead of throwing their ancient book out, theists stick to the age-old myths and set of ideas that have already been debunked.

One of the greatest traits of humanity is being able to change our minds, yet people, especially politicians and lawyers, are always worried about being caught changing their minds. What is so bad about changing your mind once you become aware of better evidence and logic? These people are afraid that if they are caught changing their position on any subject, they would be ridiculed as inconsistent and fear people won’t take them seriously. This is the sad state of our society where we condemn those who change their position in light of better evidence and condone those who stubbornly stick to their archaic views despite evidence against them.

This is why I have a problem with ‘conservatives’ – because by definition, they are change averse and hold to their traditional values. How can you ever improve on your current position without changing? Whether we like it or not, we all change, even the conservatives. If we were all unchanged as Muslims or Christians, we still would have slaves as the Quran and Bible sanction them. We have a slave-less world thanks to the people who ‘changed their minds’.

Going back to the Muslim apologist argument that ‘science is changing, meaning it’s subject to error, but our book doesn’t change’, they usually use

this argument against evolution as though they are asserting that because certain scientific views change over time, evolution will also be disproven one day, so we should stick to the Adam and Eve hypothesis simply because it's written in their book.

Certain truths are established beyond any doubt, such as the sun being bigger than the moon, and evolution is in the same category; not only is it evident from the fossil record as Darwin knew it, but also, evolution is evident at the genetic level. All species fit perfectly in the family tree of life. Evolution is not going anywhere, so changing your mind in light of the evidence supporting evolution is a better idea than sticking to the Adam and Eve hypothesis, for which there is absolutely no evidence.

Just like many other claims of religious apologists, the claim that they don't change because they have the word of God is also a dishonest claim. For example, 150 years ago, no one in the Islamic world was reinterpreting verses about sex slavery, but ultimately, they ended up reinterpreting them and changing the word of Allah, so they do change in light of better reason and logic. Today there is raging debate in the Muslim scholarly world on whether Islam allows child marriages or not. How they are doing it is by reinterpreting the hadiths that show Aisha was nine years old when Muhammad consummated their marriage. They are simply discarding these hadiths because they understand the importance of changing. Another hot topic of discussion is wife-beating in Islam. Allah has clearly said in the Quran that you can beat your disobedient wives. Fifty years ago, this was not a problem at all, and there was no need to reinterpret it or change your mind about it. Today, after constant ridicule from Westerners and especially ex-Muslims, they are changing the word of God; some are saying, 'Well, Muhammad never beat his wife [although he might have hit Aisha], so we shouldn't beat our wives either.' Some say, 'You can lightly beat her – but don't break her bones.' Some say, 'Beat her symbolically.' These are all mental gymnastics around the word of God. They know it is unacceptable in today's society, so they have to change their minds and the minds of their people by modifying the word of Allah.

This is why progressive thinkers despise religion; it actually stops progressive thinking. If you did not have a book that said Adam and Eve were the first humans, you would not be lagging in the invention of modern vaccines that could not have been invented without the understanding of evolution. If you did not have a book that said, 'Beat your wife', then you would not be so caught on how to beat up your wife.

So hopefully, now that you have realised there is nothing wrong with changing your opinion in light of reason and better evidence, you will adopt method B. Let's get into religion – and don't be afraid to change your mind.

CHAPTER 2

The Necessity of Religion

Christopher Hitchens understood that the universe doesn't care about our existence and our lives have meaning only to the extent that we give them meaning.

— Dr Lawrence Krauss on Christopher Hitchens at the Atheist Annual Convention, 2012

One of religion's defenders' favourite arguments is that religion is necessary to keep our society in order. They think that if we had no God, the world would be a terrible place where rape, murder, and looting would be the norm, and there would be no stopping it. They also think that as religion gives hope and comfort to its believers, it is necessary for mental peace. There are tons of other arguments where religion's defenders try to tell us how religion is a necessity of society, but for the sake of saving some trees, I shall only pick the most popular of these.

I was once having a discussion with my Muslim friend who believed religion is important as it teaches us ethics and morals. To my surprise but also my liking (and the benefit of this chapter), he picked the least subtle of examples to describe the moral superiority of religion. He said that religion helps us differentiate between our relationships as it tells us not to have sex with our mothers or sisters, and if it wasn't for religion, we would all be having incestuous relationships. I must admit I was rather baffled by this example, but I was glad to counter his crude argument. I knew my friend had no knowledge of evolution, so it was easy for me to understand why he thinks the Quran is the word of God.

The theory of evolution teaches the concept of the 'survival of the fittest', the continuation of the species through natural selection. For example, if leopards

couldn't climb trees, they would have had a hard time surviving against lions and hyenas. Leopards that were better at climbing trees had a higher chance of survival and therefore produced more offspring. Throughout the history of the animal kingdom, we have had animals replaced by their smarter, stronger counterparts because they could not cope with their environment. Evolution isn't necessarily about being the strongest; after the extinction of the dinosaurs, tiny burrowing mammals – which, up until this point, were on the dinner table – started coming out and exploring the world. In other words (with some help from outer space), these little mammals were fitter than the big Tyrannosaurus rex and ended up inheriting the world. If these mammals had been living on the surface, they would have also died out along with the dinosaurs, and humans may have never existed. Now I would like to jump to some sixty-three million years later when the first hominids started to appear. Yes, I understand you might have some issues, but as per method B, let's keep going for now.

It is important for me to add that although Darwinism tells us that nature operates on the survival of the fittest, supporters of the evolutionary theory do not suggest that we should run our societies to mirror nature. For example, in nature, if a mother has too many children, she will kill and eat the weaker ones to ensure the survival of the stronger ones. In our society, we don't encourage one another to eat our children if we cannot support them or if we're just very hungry. Even though nature works that way, we know our society doesn't have to. Atheists are not suggesting a society based on the law of the jungle (natural), where the powerful destroys the weak, but instead insist we can create better societies based on reason.

Back to the discussion with my friend, whether inbreeding is good or bad is a scientific question rather than a philosophical one. If early humans had not realised that inbreeding was causing problems, those humans would have died out. As we are here, it is safe to conclude that early humans were not practicing inbreeding, or at least the ones who *were* practicing it didn't live long enough. With this knowledge in mind, I answered my friend that as a modern human, I know that if one engages in an incestuous relationship, they

would be contributing to the demise of the human species, and it is safe to assume early humans knew the consequences of inbreeding. If these religions were the first time humans were told not to inbreed, then they suggest that inbreeding had been taking place for thousands of years before Islam, Christianity, or Judaism (as human civilisation is much older than these religions), but if this was the case, then humanity would have long died out before Jesus or Muhammad was ever born. It is true that incest was practiced in many cultures such as Egypt and Rome, but it was almost always by nobility and not by the general public.

It is understandable that some Christians and Muslims might mention that I am arguing that humans had been around for hundreds of thousands of years before Jesus or Muhammad ever showed up. This is correct as humans *have* been around for hundreds of thousands of years, and we have an incalculable amount of evidence in the fossil record. However, for the sake of the argument, I will not assert that humans have been around for hundreds of thousands of years and instead consider the Christian explanation that Earth has been around for about six thousand years. I would like to ask that since early humans, such as Noah and Adam, used to live for at least a thousand years (according to Christian and Islamic beliefs) and given that Jesus lived two thousand years ago, were there only four thousand years between the creation of Earth and Adam and the birth of Jesus? If we can narrow it down even further, the first two of these four thousand years were spent on the lives of Adam and Noah, so we are only left with two thousand years. Are these religions suggesting that all the prophets, such as Jacob and Abraham, and the entire ancient Greek, Roman, and Egyptian civilisations only had two thousand years? Even without going into detail, can you not see anything wrong with this conclusion?

According to Judeo-Christian (including Islamic) history, Adam and Eve's children were brothers and sisters, and they all mated with one another and practiced inbreeding. Since this was God's first human couple, he obviously encouraged inbreeding. If he found out later that inbreeding was dangerous for the survival of the species, then obviously, he is not all that smart because

he only had to look into the human genome (which he allegedly created), and he would have known what happens when two siblings reproduce. I wonder why God couldn't create two human couples – short-sightedness perhaps? Even if, for whatever reason, he didn't want to create two couples, then why did he create all the genetic problems associated with inbreeding? Again, clearly, this God isn't all that long-sighted or all-knowing.

I am not advocating incestuous relationships, but if you think about it, they are only considered bad because of genetic problems. There are lions in Gir, India, facing extinction because of inbreeding, and according to some scientists, the Tasmanian devil's facial tumour disease is partially caused by inbreeding. If genetic diversity was not necessary, then inbreeding would have been acceptable, so if we do not mate with our immediate family members, it is because of science, not morals. Muslims believe it is okay to have children with your cousins; however, in the West, people find it outrageous and disgusting. If we had not found problems with inbreeding, it would have been just as acceptable in our society as marrying cousins is to Muslims.

I asked my friend if religion was the only reason that he doesn't think about having sex with his sisters or daughters, and trapped in his own argument, he replied, 'Yes.' For the sake of his mother, sisters, and daughters, I hope he never gives up his religion. Or he could learn that inbreeding is dangerous not because his God tells him but because it is evident from the scientific knowledge we have. To sum up, you don't need some old scripture with all its baggage of fairy tales, winged horses, and stories of a magical man walking on water and converting water into wine to tell you what is good for the species and what is not. Instead, you can open up to scientific knowledge and learn for yourself that Earth wasn't created six thousand years ago and why it is *not* okay to inbreed. The human species has come a long way, from walking for days to cover a few miles to flying for thousands of miles in a few hours, all thanks to human ingenuity and creativeness and not because of stories about angels and demons.

That was only one example where religion unfairly took ownership of moral behaviour. There are plenty of other behaviours that religion has taken ownership of and declared that God has forbidden, such as rape, murder, and theft. Do religious people really think that if there was no imaginary police commissioner up in the skies, everyone on Earth would be raping, murdering, and looting? Obviously, this isn't the case as we have less religious societies with lower crime rates than their religious counterparts, and they do so without using fear or violence.

In his journal *Religion and Society*, author Gregory S. Paul compared eighteen prosperous democracies and found that societies with the least religious influence had less crime than ones that believed in a creator. At the top of the list was Japan, where 80 per cent of the population believes in evolution and only 10 per cent of the population believes in some sort of god. Although Japan has Buddhism as a majority religion, according to the WIN/Gallup 2017 survey, only 13 per cent of the Japanese identified themselves as 'religious'. Statistically, Japan is one of the least crime-prone countries in the world. Next in line are the Norwegians, British, Germans, and Dutch, where at least 60 per cent of the population believe in evolution and less than a third believe in some sort of god. The homicide rate in these countries is as low as one to two in one hundred thousand people per year. I cannot even begin to comprehend how bad Pakistan, my country of birth, would look on this scale with all its murders, rapes, and suicide bombings. On the other side of the spectrum is the world's most powerful nation, the United States of America, where over 50 per cent of people believe in a god and less than 40 per cent people believe in evolution. This country, with its God-fearing superiority complex, has a homicide rate five times higher than the countries mentioned above and ten times higher than Japan's.

According to Robert Putnam and David Campbell's *American Grace: How Religion Divides Us*, 83 per cent of the American population identify as believers in some sort of deity and 60 to 75 per cent of people identify as Christians, whereas 15 per cent do not affiliate with any religion. So in U.S. state and federal prisons, 75 per cent of the inmates are Christians, but why

are only 6.8 per cent and not 15 per cent of the inmates atheists? This means that crime amongst religious people is twice that of those with no religion. Obviously, it would be absurd to suggest that people in American jails commit their crimes because of their religious beliefs, and while I do not hold the view that people in American jails justify murder, rape, or fraud with their religion, the point I want to make is that religion does not stop people from committing crime. The fear of a divine being up in the skies watching over our every evil move does not stop people.

In fact, there are many cases where religion causes people to do terrible things. In the Islamic world, terrorism stems from political differences caused by religious differences; Muslims don't want the Christian way of life over theirs, or Sunnis prefer their version of Islam over the Shias'. It is important to assert that *not* all the political differences stem from religion, but religion is the leading cause of political differences in the world. Never mind countries like Saudi Arabia, who have a long way to go before we can include them in something called a 'society'. By using fear and intimidation (chopping off hands and beheading), you may reduce crime, but it would definitely not be a society I would want to live in. Anyone who thinks countries like Saudi Arabia are perfect is welcome to leave their 'less theocratic' and 'imperfect' society and go and live there.

The argument that religion is necessary because it stops people from doing terrible deeds fails when religious people commit crimes. For argument's sake, let's suppose that religion actually promotes peace; the statistics above prove that religion has failed to deliver on its promises, and what do we do with anything that doesn't deliver on its promises? We discard it and replace it with something more effective. Clearly, religion is *not* reducing crime, but atheism is making our society less criminal. I used the word *less* because no atheist would claim that if all societies became completely atheist, we would have zero crime, but based on the statistics above, I can safely say there would be much less crime than now. Can you imagine a world where crime is halved?

I will never take seriously the argument that religion doesn't affect our lives, so we should let people believe in whatever they want. Of course, I am not suggesting we put a gun on every religious person's head and ask them to discard their religion because this is what religions do, but I feel it is my moral obligation to spread this information to as many people as possible, and hopefully, in a not-so-distant future, we can sack this useless, incompetent police officer in the skies.

Religion's defenders also claim that religion is useful because it makes people more charitable to one another. I will not deny the great charity work most philanthropists do, but I would argue that philanthropy is not limited to religious people. In my personal view, if you do 'good' just for the promise of an eternal reward, that is not very commendable anyway. Charity is another phenomenon that has been hijacked by religion. The biggest philanthropist in the world is Bill Gates, who, to date, has donated twenty-eight billion dollars via his charity and who also happens to be an atheist. The second biggest philanthropist is Warren Buffet, who has donated close to twenty-seven billion and also happens to be an atheist. I will not claim that atheism automatically makes you more charitable, but the two examples above show that charity is not limited to religious people. Most billionaires who are noteworthy philanthropists also end up subscribing to the idea of their forefathers, i.e. if they happen to be born in a Christian household, they stay Christian. If we lost all religion from the world tomorrow, philanthropy would not disappear; in fact, it would probably not be impacted at all.

I shall now discuss how comforting religion is to religious people. Imagine what hope a young fawn born in the wild has when it has to start running from the moment it is born. To this fawn, the struggle to exist starts from the moment it is conceived in its mother's womb. A fawn isn't told to think that if you believe in God, you would have hope of living a better life. Any moment could be its last if a cheetah eyes it as easy prey. So why are humans so special that they need comfort and hope? In the words of Prof Richard Dawkins, 'The universe does not owe humans any hope!' Even my mother suggests that she feels better when she thinks there is a God watching over

her and protecting her from pain and suffering. She believes even when this life is over, she will go to heaven and live happily ever after. Naturally, we love ‘feel-good’ stories that inspire us. For example, the story of Achilles inspired Alexander the Great to be a great warrior. Although his love of Achilles served him well, I don’t think it served the people who were conquered by him equally well. In the same way, Osama Bin Laden’s belief in Allah inspired him to recruit people to fly planes into the World Trade Center, but it didn’t serve the innocent civilians who were killed because of some crazy man’s belief in his imaginary friend. Fuelling hope and inspiration may sound good – but not when people use it to justify doing terrible things.

Clearly, the idea of hope is unique to humans, so why do millions of other species on this planet have no idea about it? One can argue that because they can’t think, they don’t need any comfort, but doesn’t a mother bear go to extremes to ensure her offspring’s survival? Don’t lionesses starve themselves and divorce their pride to ensure the safety of their young cubs? Humans are unique because we can see death coming, so out of fear, we created the afterlife. This belief gives some people a sort of comfort and a way to defeat death. I can’t speak for everyone, but I think that even religious people are afraid of dying. In *Religulous*, a rather comedic yet eye-opening documentary film by American comedian and political commentator Bill Maher, he asked a believer why, if the afterlife is so beautiful, he doesn’t kill himself so he could go to a better place. Obviously, the guy had no answer, but this is a simple, easy-to-understand question. If I want to go somewhere where I think I would live a happy life, wouldn’t I rush to get there? When I was growing up in Pakistan, I always wanted to go and live in a Western country. I applied for a visa to the United States, but unfortunately, because of the September 11 terrorist attacks, it was rather hard for a young Muslim man to enter the United States. Instead, Australia agreed to take me in, and I have never regretted choosing Australia as my adoptive country. I dreamed and worked day and night to go to a Western country and ended up in one, so why wouldn’t a religious person, who thinks that life is so brilliant up in

heaven, rush to go there? I've asked the same question to my mother and almost every religious person I know, but I haven't had a clear, logical answer.

So it's logical to conclude that religious people *are* afraid of dying and are *not* very keen to go to paradise. If they think life is better up there, then they should hurry up and try to go to heaven (this is the idea sold to young Muslim boys who agree to blow themselves up but is not a common view of the majority of the Muslim population). Going with the consideration that religious people actually believe in the afterlife, there are two possible reasons why we do not have mass suicides in the religious world:

- 1: They love their life here on Earth so much that they don't want it to end, so they believe it will continue in some form after their death. This is where heaven comes in.
- 2: They think that they haven't lived their lives as per the instructions of the scriptures. This is where hell comes in.

With both these possibilities in mind, I find it hard to call either of them 'comfort'. The first possibility suggests that a person needs a mental check-up because they have created a delusion to try and protect their life on Earth. Nothing is wrong with a little imagination as long as it remains imagination and isn't conflated with reality. When I was a boy and first watched *Jurassic Park*, I loved it so much, I started thinking there might be a place in the world where dinosaurs still exist. I loved this idea so much that I actually created an imaginary world where I was being chased by a mighty T-Rex and running for my life. At the time of writing this book, I am 34 years old, and I still play a game when I tell my partner, 'Run quickly! Jump in the car! A T-Rex is chasing us!' It's so funny to watch her reaction as she rushes to and jumps in the car, screaming, as I speed off. Why a T-Rex and not an alien from outer space? Obviously, it has something to do with my fascination with dinosaurs. Since I learned how to think properly, I no longer believe there is a part of the world where a T-Rex is still roaming around and terrorising motorists, so

what about these adults who actually believe in a world they created in their minds? Have they not grown out of their imaginary friend?

Obviously, they don't believe it is an imaginary world, just like I didn't believe that my world with dinosaurs was imaginary, but to put it simply, as there is no evidence that there is a heaven, it is likely it doesn't exist, just like there isn't any evidence for a T-Rex in some unexplored region of Earth. As such, I rule this first possibility not a comfort but a mental health problem, and if you suffer from it, you should see your nearest psychologist as soon as possible. Depending on how many people actually take my message seriously, I can expect a lot of 'thank you' letters from psychologists around the world.

The second possibility is even further from comfort. A child is told that if you choose option A, then you will go to heaven, but if you choose option B, then you will go to hell. Obviously, if it was this simple, then no one would worry about hell, but as religion comes with so much baggage, it is impossible to live without worrying about it. For example, in all Abrahamic religions, if you don't believe in God, you will go to hell. In Islam, if you drink alcohol, are born gay, or consume non-halal food, you will go to hell. Also, sex out of wedlock is an instant passport to hell, even though you can own sex slaves. There are religious people who do all these things and are traumatised with the thought that they are going to hell. If they are not, they obviously do not really believe in their religion seriously enough.

I must admit that as I was raised as a Muslim, when I first started questioning the stories of Islam, I held back my thoughts because of my fear of hellfire. Richard Dawkins compares this to child abuse, and I cannot find any other words to describe the feelings and fears I had to live with. It still frightens me when I think of what a religious child goes through when they think they will burn in hell for all eternity if they listen to Lady Gaga or any musician. Who in their right mind can call this comfort? It is anything but comfort. Even Muslims have changed their religion to the extent that they have allowed music and art in their lives, at least in less extremist societies like Pakistan

and Turkey. I will write about these types of Muslims later, but we cannot deny there is a severe fear of hellfire in almost every religious child and adult.

Through the Facebook page I run (by the name of Ex-Muslim Atheist), I have met a lot of people who question their belief so much so that they are constantly stressed about hellfire. One woman who contacted me, whom I will give the fake name Hope (she does not want to risk being identified for fear of reprisal), was so confused between rationality and the religion she was brainwashed with when she was a child that she was traumatised about hellfire.

Here is one of her messages:

MUN 4:41PM

Hi Harris and every admins.

Thank you for the response. I am sorry for not replying faster. By far, this has been the most emotional and spiritual challenging week of my life. Yesterday I wasn't OK at all. That's why I did not write. Writing to your page shakes the core of my being.

Many things finally make all senses and many things are still too hard to cope with.

It has been 2 days since we talked I lost my will to live. The pain is too much and the confusion is too big. I could not perform my routine. I got up for Fajr like I do but I walked around my neighbourhood alone instead. Trying to look for the difference.

We all are marching towards death. Since the fear of separation is #1 reason of my sorrow, I hear my clock ticking louder than ever. Tears running through my cheeks all day long and unstoppable. And at night, I literally choked a couple times and was awakened. The mentally stress is manifested to my body.

I decided not to write you guys when I hit the bottom cos I didn't want to bring you anymore dramas. You also have your own stuffs to do plus probably more cases like me to help.

I made a video especially for her to help her cope with this totally irrational

dilemma. Here is how I responded.

I can see Hope is feeling scared and sad because she is struggling to reconcile the idea that this life is all there is. The religious apologists often tell us that there is no purpose to life if there is no heaven or hell. I never took this claim seriously until I realised it has a real impact on some people.

After all, what are we here for? We are born in a country, a religion, and a race without any choice. We are even given names by our parents without any say at all. Then we go to schools, if we are lucky, grow up, make babies, get old, and die. Hmmm, seems a pretty useless exercise, especially when we never asked for it. At least this is what religious people think of us atheists' view of life.

One thing atheism teaches us is humility. Just think for a moment. The universe was not created for us. We are not special. We are living on a tiny planet around an ordinary star in the outskirts of a galaxy that is one in one hundred billion or even more. If this thought doesn't bring you humility, then I don't know what does.

We die – so what? There is no big brother watching over us – so what? So what if we are not rewarded for our good deeds, and so what if some people get away with their terrible actions?

Why do we have to feel special all the time? Think about a zebra that is born in a world of terror. The moment it sets foot on this beautiful planet, it has to start running from lions and leopards. Most of them get eaten before their first birthday. They were also born without a choice. They were also born in a species they didn't choose, but they wanted to live. Unfortunately, they die and get eaten without a choice. This is how most of the humans lived for hundreds of thousands of years. Dare I say, we are lucky that we are alive in this day and age, when we can expect to live up to the age of 70 or 80, enjoy relationships, friendships, and good food, travel the

world, and enjoy music and art. Is this not worth living for?

To all those people who feel down because they think there is no purpose to life, if you remove the imaginary friends in the sky, you are finally free. It's like you have turned into an adult from a child. Now you don't need your father or mother to hold your hand. You can let go of it and go out and explore the wide world with freedom. At least your father and mother are real, so you don't have to forget them, but this can't be said about this imaginary father in the sky who gives no evidence of his existence. Letting go of his imaginary hand should be a great sense of joy and freedom.

Yes, we are all going to die. Who is to say that within the next thirty years or so, science won't be able to increase our lifespan from 80 years up to 200 years or even immortality? Living forever does not define purpose, so why do you have to believe that when you die on Earth, you will go to this heaven where you will live happily ever after forever? What will you do there? Wake up, eat food, have sex, go to bed, and then do the whole thing again for billions of years? I find this thought depressing. If anything, it is more purposeless than dying in our old age one day.

We have been given this extraordinary gift of life by nature, by chance, and without a choice – but a gift nonetheless. We can wake up every day, go to a job that gives us purpose. You can become a doctor and help ease the pain of people living in agony, or you can become a philanthropist and ease the suffering of the people who do not have the luxuries of life that we take for granted. You can give your life any purpose you want. You are in the driver's seat! Personally, I feel a great sense of joy and satisfaction when I help a single homeless person with a hot burger or a warm blanket. I feel good for days helping one person whenever I can. I am doing this because I'm feeling great about talking to people like you, listening to your issues and addressing them to the best of my ability.

This page is more of a support group for people like you. You can write to us anytime you want. Some of you are added in my personal Facebook profile, so we can share our lives in some shape or form with one another. Never think twice about writing to our page. We have three admins who dedicate a big chunk of their time so we can speak to our fellow atheists who are in trouble. We cannot do everything, but we can listen to what you have to say.

One thing is for certain. From the biggest stars to the smallest atoms, nothing lasts forever. Atoms don't usually die, but they will also die when the universe dies in a hundred trillion years. We don't have to be special. We don't have to live forever. Feelings of happiness, anger, sadness, jealousy will not last forever. Some people hold these feelings longer than others, but that is not to say it will stay there forever. Letting go of anger and things that make you sad is the first step towards reaching neutrality. We get happy for various reasons, but those reasons also fade away, and then we go in this neutral state of mind. We get sad for various reasons, like failure of love, friendship, financial stress, lack of career, etc. No matter how much you feel at that time there is no way out of this sadness, trust me, there always is. You just have to keep fighting and *never give up!*

After I made this video and dedicated it to Hope, we became very close friends, and she is doing very well now. She no longer feels the need to believe in God to give purpose to her life. She has since travelled to new countries, made new friends, and is enjoying life to its fullest.

When my mother said she finds it rather comforting that one day she will go to heaven, I asked her if it was likely she will go to hell since she watches movies, listens to music, and doesn't think homosexuals or apostates should be killed etc. I could see the colour of her face changing with fear, and I rather felt bad for causing my own mother such anxiety.

When I came out of the grip of this dogma, I often wondered where the idea

of heaven and hell came from. I understand that we stop our children from doing something by threatening them with imaginary ghosts or punishments, and in our minds, at least we think that they will stop and listen to us. I know it never worked for me as my mother used to tell me not to go out and run like a roadrunner or Allah would come at night and take away my feet. I would be afraid, but ultimately, I would still do what I wanted to do, like go out, play sports, and run like there was no tomorrow. In the same way, little children are taught that if they don't believe in God, they will burn in hell forever. It is ironic that just like me and my mother's threats, religious people ignore the threats of their god and go about their business, committing all sorts of crimes and sins. But unlike me, these people actually grow up and still believe in heaven and hellfire. Again, hardly a comfort. I must admit that in my case, the observation was simpler as it is easy to wake up with both feet than find out what happens after you die, but what about the rational experiences from our day-to-day lives? When our car breaks down, we don't expect a divine hand to come and fix it; we go to a mechanic to fix the car. Even experiences like these don't make people question their beliefs in magic and angels.

The Islamic faith asserts that those who sin in this world are punished both in this world and the next, so why do a lot of wicked people die without any punishment on Earth? How do we know they are burning in hell? I was once watching an episode of Q&A where Cardinal George Pell told Richard Dawkins that it is nice to know that Hitler is burning in hell now. The cardinal thought that since Hitler got away so lightly in this world, it was not justice for his fifty million victims. Obviously, it would be nice to know that Hitler and Stalin are still paying for their crimes some seven or eight decades after they committed them, but does Earth really owe us any sense of comfort? Just because it is nice to think that Hitler is still burning in hell, is it enough evidence to believe he is *actually* burning in hell? What about a newborn lion cub who is killed instantly by a male lion who wants the lionesses for himself? Would this lion be burnt in hell forever for killing baby lions? Why do humans consider themselves so special that we demand

comfort in response to natural injustice, especially when we share this planet with millions of other species who don't get any comfort from the natural cruelties that are beyond their control? No, I don't think there's a hell.

Now what about heaven, where we have rivers of milk and wine and seventy-two virgins at our disposal (not to mention only one husband to the women who go to heaven), where we will never die and will have everything we want? Wow, isn't that a beautiful dream? Evidence? Zero. Probability? Next to zero. Do you want to waste your entire life over a highly improbable dream and not listen to music, enjoy art, or give equal rights to women? You would deprive almost 50 per cent of Earth's human population of their basic rights just because heaven might be real? I certainly do not want to waste my life over such an improbable dream. This is why faith is taught to be a virtue; because of the improbability of heaven and hell, you are bound to question its existence no matter how blindly you believe in it. The constant struggle in the minds of religious people can hardly be considered a comfort.

Lastly, since when does a belief in something, no matter how comforting, make that belief factual? Just like my belief in dinosaurs in some unexplored part of the world comforted me and gave me great joy, it didn't make it factual. Similarly, your belief in the afterlife that comforts you doesn't necessarily make it true.

These ideas can be dangerous to the progress of the human race. Throughout the Dark Ages, the Catholic Church was a powerful organisation that held science and scientists as its personal assets. It held the view that Earth was at the centre of the universe, giving the Catholic Church a special place on Earth among its fellow inhabitants. It was comforting for the church to know that Earth was at the centre of the universe and everything in the universe actually orbited around us. Isn't it a nice feeling that we are so special that billions of galaxies with trillions of stars have been made just for us? Another comforting thought was that Earth is the only planet that is capable of supporting life, meaning we are very special. This thought was so comforting that when brilliant philosopher Giordano Bruno suggested that there were

other stars elsewhere, just like our sun, and they may also have planets of their own like Earth, he was burned alive at the stake. He was obviously right, and as of 1 January 2018, 3,726 planets have been discovered. Johannes Copernicus – and later Galileo Galilei – confirmed that Earth was not the centre of the universe. The church persecuted all three of these brilliant humans for discovering the secrets of the universe and actually slowed down the rate of human progress. This church is doing the same thing today with its discrimination against homosexuals and objection to contraception. Although the Catholic Church has come a long way since the time of Bruno and now officially accepts evolution, the same can't be said for Islam. So did a comforting thought, such as humans being so special that everything in the universe orbits around them, turn out to be true? Obviously not. The truth can be bitter and does not discriminate between comfort and discomfort. The truth is far bigger than a comforting thought for some puny species living on a tiny planet in an insignificant part of an insignificant galaxy. Did human society come to an end when they realised their comforting thought was actually false? No. So what legitimacy do these same religious people have today when they say, 'Oh, people need a religion as it is comforting to them'? Let me make a prediction (which is not really a prediction, more history repeating itself) that when we discard something as comforting as the idea of some sort of deity up in the skies, the human species will *not* cease to exist, nor will our society fall into chaos.

There is a well-known medical phenomenon called the 'placebo effect', which makes people feel better if they are told that they have been treated for a problem. If a cancer patient is given pills and told that their cancer has been cured, they actually start feeling better and think that they have beaten cancer. But just because the patient is feeling better doesn't mean the cancer is actually gone. Even though religion seems to comfort people, we can't assume it actually does, so the argument that a belief in God and the afterlife is comforting cannot be presented as a fact.

One of the physicists I respect and admire the most, Dr Michio Kaku, was in a debate called 'Does the Universe Have a Purpose?' He said that the

question of whether God exists or not is *not* a scientific question. I could not disagree with anything more than this. Dr Kaku went on to say that we will still be debating this question in a hundred years' time, so it is pointless to ask. Have not humans been wondering for thousands of years as to where they have come from? Or have not humans been wondering how the universe started? Just because the answer is difficult to find doesn't make it unworthy of finding. On the contrary, we have actually disproven the known gods so far. The only thing that is difficult to disprove is a vague, deistic god, which doesn't make any difference anyway as it doesn't care how we live our lives.

Dr Kaku went on and said some people think we may actually have a 'God gene', a gene that makes us want to believe in a higher power. Earlier, I demonstrated that simply because we like to believe in something does not mean it is real. But why are we asking this question? Why are we debating whether God exists or not when we actually have a gene that forces us to believe in a higher power? If we have a gene that forces us to believe in a higher power, we should remove that gene through science. Just like we do not have a tail anymore because we no longer require it, we can actually work towards getting rid of this useless gene.

As I have explained how religion is *not* a necessity for human civilisation, I will now argue how necessary it is to get rid of it. Religion stops you from evolving your thoughts. While religious societies are still constantly evolving, it is important to notice the speed of this evolution and compare it with less-religious societies. Religion does not encourage you to change your mind, particularly Islam. Change of mind can be perceived as a bad thing, and so politicians, lawyers, and people in general go to great lengths to claim that they are still standing firm on their initial position. Although it is a good habit to stand by your beliefs, you should always be open to discussion. For example, if you are a proponent of capital punishment, you should be open to discuss the pros and cons of it. When a better counter-argument comes, you shouldn't be ashamed to change your position. Religion stops this discussion and forces you to stick to beliefs deemed correct and makes you fight against progress. For example, in Islam, homosexuality, female equality, and

adultery can never be accepted, but Muslim countries are moving slowly towards accepting them. Two hundred years ago, no one in the Muslim world would have denounced slavery because it was allowed in Islam, but the societies that got rid of slavery forced the Muslim world to change. While progress is still being made, it would be much quicker without religion.

Ellen, my partner's mother, was a devout Catholic and wonderful human being who lived a long healthy life. She was a strong independent woman who worked hard as a nurse, looking after sick people and producing four wonderful children who all grew up to be good moral citizens. In 2015, she was diagnosed with a motor neurone disease, and doctors gave her two to three years maximum. Right before our eyes, we watched this once healthy and strong individual fade over a matter of months. It was a difficult time, especially for her children, who were not used to seeing their strongly independent mother now relying on her children for the most of basic of activities.

Ellen wanted to die independently and honourably through euthanasia. However, in our great country, we still have people who impose their religious views on the rest of us. The voluntary euthanasia movement has only one obstacle: organised Christianity in Australia. The religion Ellen followed so dearly was now standing in the way of her freedom and personal choice.

Daniel Andrews, a Victorian Premier and a devout Roman Catholic, had been a strong critic of the voluntary euthanasia movement. As a Roman Catholic, he had to be critical of voluntary euthanasia despite reason and strong arguments. His views on voluntary euthanasia changed after a tragic personal experience; his father suffered from a rare cancer and died in 2016 after a long and painful battle. After seeing his father suffer, he changed his views. This is a clear example of how religion stops you from changing your mind for good outcomes. How unfair is it that had his father not died, Daniel Andrews would have remained a staunch critic of voluntary euthanasia? Voluntary euthanasia is still not legal in Australia or even Victoria; however,

the debate has started, and I am sure that eventually, human decency and intelligence will prevail over dogmatic beliefs.

It baffles me how religion has this urge to take over society. Logically speaking, if you don't want to euthanise yourself because of your religious beliefs, then don't do it. Why force it on those who have nothing to do with your religion? If I suffer from some debilitating disease and I know my next six months are going to be extreme agony, why should I not have the right to end my life on my own terms? I have nothing to do with Catholicism or Islam, so why should their rules apply to me?

You may think I am contradicting my own statement by pointing out that religious societies and people have changed their minds, but I consider this another failure of religion. If Muhammad came today, he would be shocked to see Muslims being tolerant towards and befriending homosexuals, non-Muslims, and especially atheists, allowing women to go out on their own, etc. If you think about it, this is a failure of Islam to keep Muslims in the seventh-century Muslim world. Despite religion's best efforts, human morality still evolves, but Islam has given a strict code of conduct that is *not* to be broken. If slavery was not condoned by Islam, Christianity, and other religions, we would have gotten rid of it a long time ago, maybe in the Renaissance. If Islamic women were not supposed to be subservient to men, Saudi Arabian women would not have waited till 2017 to be allowed to drive cars. If homosexuality was not considered an abomination, a progressive country like Australia would not have waited until 2017 to allow marriage equality, and Muslim countries wouldn't have to wait another fifty or maybe one hundred years. These things change anyway, but all religion does is slow down this progress. This is why it is necessary to get rid of religion altogether.

Depression

Whether you are an atheist, Christian, or Muslim, you might have either made or heard the claim that atheists are just a bunch of depressed people. This claim is more popular amongst Muslims for atheists and even non-Muslims. The central premise of this argument is something like this:

because atheists have no one to look up to in the times of trouble, they are depressed.

It is important that I state clearly early on in this chapter that I am not associating committing suicide with religion; in fact, I am divorcing these ideas, but it's important to acknowledge the arguments as they are made. Many Muslims back up this claim by loosely quoting the number of suicides in developed countries like Japan, South Korea, and the United States compared to the lack of suicides in Muslim countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Let us pick some of these countries:

Country	Suicides per 100,000 ¹³²
Kazakhstan*	27.5
South Korea	24.1
Japan	15.4
Nigeria*	15.1
United States	12.6
Sudan*	11.4
Australia	10.4
South Sudan	9.6
Saudi Arabia*	3.9
Iran*	3.6
Pakistan*	2.5

*Countries marked with * indicate majority Muslim population.*

Kazakhstan, with a majority Muslim population, is ranked number four after Sri Lanka, Guyana, and Mongolia, respectively, and none of those top three countries are predominantly atheist.

It is true that the suicide rate in Muslim countries like Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia is comparatively quite low given the latter two are rather

oppressive states. Pakistan, on the other hand, is a rather financially poor society but isn't as oppressive as the other two. So why do these Muslim countries have such a low suicide rate? Suicide is discouraged in Islam, and that could possibly be a factor, but that is not the full story. Being a Pakistani, I am well aware of how suicides are systematically hidden from the official records as they are considered a stigma and shameful for the family. Suicide and rape are the two biggest phenomena that go massively under-reported purely because of the societal pressure in Pakistan. Just like you wouldn't trust a human rights report coming out of Saudi Arabia and Iran, we can't trust a report on suicide from these countries. Suicides have more to do with one's state of mind than simply the belief in God or lack thereof. There are far too many variables involved that lead to a suicide. If belief in God alone was effective in preventing suicide, then Kazakhstan, which is a majority Muslim country, would not have had such a high suicide rate.

Depression is a prolonged state of sadness which can be caused by all types of reasons, such as financial problems, career problems, the loss of a loved one, etc. It can also be caused because of biological chemical imbalances that are totally out of one's control. Since we are discussing the depression caused by material things or behaviour, we'll discuss it only in the case of prolonged sadness and not chemical imbalance. Just like happiness, anger, love, hate, and jealousy, we also feel sadness. Sadness is simply one of the by-products of life. We just have to take it with all the good that comes with life. Nabil Qureshi was an American Muslim who converted to Christianity and was harshly attacked by Muslims. These Muslims rather enjoyed the fact that he was diagnosed with stomach cancer at the young age of 30. The Internet was filled with Muslim apologists calling his stomach cancer punishment from Allah for leaving the true religion, Islam.

Muslims are not the only guilty party; when one of the Muslims, Ahmed Deedat, a Muslim cleric who wasted no opportunity to attack Christianity, died a painful death in 2005, it was Christians who called it the 'Lord's punishment'. He suffered a stroke, became totally paralysed, and could only communicate by moving his eyes. He spent the last nine years of his life on a

hospital bed and was recorded various times on video making eye movements. He looked to be in terrible agony, but he was probably just paralysed and was acting exactly like how any paralysed non-Muslim would have acted. Christian apologists used someone's misfortune and called it divine punishment. This is another terrible display of religious morality and how it forces otherwise good people to act inhumanely. What happened to Nabeel Qureshi or Ahmed Deedat could have happened to anyone and has happened to people of all beliefs or no beliefs at all. These hypocrites should realise that if these are punishments from God, specifically for people of the wrong faiths, then these diseases shouldn't occur to people of their own faith. I am an atheist and a human, and I am also likely to suffer from some sort of disease in my lifetime, whether cancer, a stroke, or a heart attack. I will also die one day, and it might be a painful process. I understand that I am biologically no different from other humans, and I have no special privilege to be alive. Just like diseases can happen to anyone, depression can happen to anyone as well.

What is more sinister is when religious apologists use the misfortune of a dying person and try to convert them to their favoured religion on their deathbed. 'Come to the Lord Jesus Christ and save yourself from eternal damnation in hell', or if you happen to have an imam around your deathbed, 'Accept Allah as the one true God and Muhammad as his last messenger'. Waleed Aly, a famous Australian Muslim apologist, once said on ABC's Q&A that on your deathbed, it is perfectly rational to accept God as you have nothing to lose. What more can you expect from a religious apologist? If I live my entire life on the principles of rationality and evidence, how can I let go of those principles in my dying moments? Wouldn't that be a gross display of hypocrisy and immorality? No, Waleed Aly, some of us like to live with principles and die with honour, and if we didn't buy into your religious nonsense when we were alive, we are not going to buy into it when we are dying. Someone should have asked Waleed Aly which God we should accept on our deathbed: Yahweh or Allah? Zeus or Thor? Buddha or Krishna? No, it would not be rational to believe in any god as your chances of believing in

the right god are still one in ten thousand. I have instructed my partner, if I am dying and she happens to be around, not to let any priest or imam come near me and try to convert me as I would not have the physical power to kick them out. In fact, I have asked her to record my last moments so no one can say, 'He converted to Islam or Christianity on his deathbed.' I have also instructed her not to give in to the pressure of my family to have my funeral performed in the Islamic custom as I would clearly be dead and not able to protest.

Religious apologists love to claim that they found God in their darkest hour. I have never understood this claim. Yes, we all go through rough times. We are all equally likely to witness the death of our parents or a total breakdown of our romantic relationships etc., but to say that 'God took me out of that troubled time' is not a factual claim. They may think that their belief in God took them out of depression, but that is not to say they could not have taken themselves out of depression any other way. Atheists go through dark times as well and manage to pull themselves out of depression without finding this non-existent God.

Not so long ago, I also went through a period of prolonged sadness, and I experienced this depression firsthand. There was this time when conversations with friends no longer interested me, music was no longer calming, books were boring, and even the feeling of sunlight on my skin couldn't cheer me up. There was this feeling of sadness that just didn't go away, and it seemed like the harder I fought against it, the harder it became to get rid of. Being experimental in nature, I decided to give Allah another go and tried talking to him; when that didn't work, I tried Yahweh. When you are drowning, you will try to grab anything that would keep you afloat. Just like that, when I was down, I would believe in anything to get out of that feeling. Despite all my efforts, there was no response from the other side. I felt like I was talking to myself, and no one can say I didn't have enough faith as I was 100 per cent willing to give it a go. Since I was vulnerable, weak, and depressed, I was open to any idea that would take me out of that low, sad feeling.

I can understand how people fall victim to believing in God when they are going through hard times. The universe is a big, scary place; there are billions of stars in our galaxy alone, and who knows what is happening on the planets around those stars? Are there people on those planets too? Are they also going through happiness and sadness? Are they killing one another over what fairy tale they believe in? These are simple questions, but the answers aren't simple. We just don't have the technological capability to find the answers, and that is what frustrates humans. Out of this frustration, we invent stories and myths that give us Band-Aid solutions. Any moment, a wandering black hole can come to our part of the galaxy and swallow all the planets and our sun, and we will be gone. Any alien species that wanders around where our solar system was would not even know about us. They wouldn't know that there was once a mighty Julius Caesar who crossed the Rubicon or a Martin Luther King Jr. who started a civil rights movement or the great wars we fought over resources and ideologies, yet here we are, doing all those things while we are existing. All these wars and movements look meaningless at the cosmological scale, don't they? Yes, indeed, they are, but that is not to say that we stop fighting for good and what is just simply because it is insignificant to the universe. We are significant to ourselves. An ant colony is as insignificant to us as we are to the universe, but the ants have been working and building their colonies for millions of years. They don't have to stop living just because humans find them insignificant.

It is easier to believe that we are all there that there is and we have this big father-like figure who is watching us and looking after us. Why fear the big and vast universe when you have the king of the universe, God, watching over you? A black hole is coming our way? No problem. Let's pray, and the king of the universe will make it go away. It does seem like a comforting belief, regardless of whether it is true or not. If I am lost in a jungle with no food, water, or clothes to keep me warm, I would love to have a friend with me who would be able to help me and get me out of my predicament, but my survival would depend on the truth. If I do have a friend, that's nice, and he will help me out, but if I don't have this friend, then the mere belief or wish

that I should have a friend would not help me survive. I will have to do something myself to get out of it. This is exactly how I got out of my troubled times. I talked to God, and since he doesn't exist, I didn't get any help from him. I fought and battled and got out of my depression. I would not recommend techniques to get out of it as I am not qualified, but if you are going through depression, seek professional help as there always is a way out through help and personal resilience but not through prayer.

So if we can get out of depression by working on ourselves and not by praying, then why resort to false beliefs? Even though we feel insignificant sometimes, why keep on feeling that way and not take responsibility and action? Atheists are not just a bunch of depressed people; we are humans just like everyone else. We get diseases like everyone else, and we get sad just like everyone else. The only difference is we overcome them through reality, not by praying to an invisible friend.

Let me finish this chapter with a great quote from a Nobel Prize-winning French author, Anatole France: 'When fifty million people say a foolish thing, it is still a foolish thing.'

CHAPTER 3

The Baggage of Religion

The question arises – why do we need religion? As mentioned in the last chapter, religion does not make people moral as we have tons of examples of great, morally correct people in our society who do not have any religion. If anything, religion's morals are actually outdated, and we can easily see the problems with the societies that draw their morals from the Quran or the Old Testament. However, in this chapter, I will not only point out the problems with the morals of some major religions but also focus on the general baggage that comes with it.

I often wonder how our world would have been if we had no superstition, if we didn't come up with stories when we failed to understand something. I wonder how our world would have been if we did not slaughter one another because of the stories we believed in. Of course, religion is not the only source of division amongst human beings; there are other reasons that divide us, such as race, gender, nationalism, greed, your favourite sports team, etc., but you have to admit that religion is the bloodiest difference of all. I find it very hard to believe that in an atheistic society, we would have systematic discrimination on the basis of gender or sexual preference. Can a non-Muslim be the head of the state in Pakistan? Of course not. The constitution of Pakistan actually publicly discriminates on the basis of religion. If Pakistan was a secular humanist country or if there was no religion in our world, I do not think governments would mandate that a non-Muslim cannot be the head of the state.

In November 2017, the Pakistani government tried to bring an oath for parliamentarians that would not make them affirm they believe in the finality of Muhammad. This slight change in the oath would have only allowed

Ahmedis, a sect of Muslims (although other factions of Islam such as Sunnis and Shias don't accept them as Muslims), to contest elections openly rather than having reserved seats as religious minorities. The Mullahs and fundamentalists erupted and demanded the head of the minister who tried to bring in this change. There were country-wide protests where scores of people lost their lives, and there was significant damage to the government and private property. This would not have happened if there was no religion.

I find religion not only dangerous but also simply useless. What good can possibly come out of a religious human that cannot come out of an irreligious human? Is it charity or love, innovation or loyalty? I honestly cannot think of anything that religion makes people do that humans cannot do for themselves without religious affiliation. Atheists do a lot of charity and love like anyone else. They invent and innovate. There is simply nothing exclusive to religious people (unless they want to take ownership of higher murder rates, the discrimination of people from different beliefs and of homosexuals, etc.). Unless someone can give conclusive evidence that atheists are morally bad people, then I can hereby assert that we can live good lives without religion.

Apart from morals, another justification religion's defenders give is that since God created everything, we have to play by his rules, and one of his rules is to worship and acknowledge him. The assertion doesn't end here, giving us pages and pages of rules and guidelines to live by. Remember, all these rules and methods of living life are coming after the huge supposition that God created everything, but for the sake of method B, we will accept this supposition. He puts strict conditions on the way we behave sexually, how we treat our children and wives (I won't mention husbands as women are not given much power to control their husbands), how we govern countries, how we see the natural world around us, and even how we run the economy. Hereafter, I will call all these rules the 'baggage of religion' as religion's defenders are not allowed to question or change them. Since we have adopted method B, we will now question this 'baggage of religion', and instead of addressing the question of whether God exists or not, we will look at those rules and laws and see if there is anything wrong with them.

I would now like to take this argument back to the seventeenth century, where Blaise Pascal, a French mathematician and philosopher, proposed a wager known as Pascal's Wager or Pascal's Gambit. Pascal proposed that believing in God is better than not believing in God as if you believe in God, whether he exists or not, you lose nothing, but if you don't believe in God and you turn out to be incorrect, you will burn in hell for eternity. Prof Richard Dawkins explained the problems with this wager in his book *The God Delusion*, where he explained we cannot consciously choose to believe or disbelieve; we can only believe in something that has evidence behind it. For example, I believe that Earth is round and not flat because of the evidence. If Jesus came to Earth and simply asserted that you must believe Earth is flat or you will burn in hell for eternity, it is not enough for anyone to believe in it. By applying Pascal's logic, we should believe that Earth is flat because if we are wrong, it won't make much difference, but if we are right, we will not fall off the edge. On the other hand, if we don't believe Earth is flat, if we are right, it won't make any difference, but if we are wrong, we run the risk of falling off the edge. If the round-Earthers in the past had followed Pascal's logic, we may not have found out that Earth is round until we could photograph it from space. Although Jesus never asserted that Earth was flat or round, you can see that putting blind belief in anything does nothing but take us further from the truth.

Expanding on Pascal's assertion, I would now like to further question this logic: Pascal claims that if we believe in God and we turn out to be right, we'll be spared eternal damnation, but if we turn out to be wrong, it won't make any difference. How can Pascal claim that it will not make any difference if you turn out to be wrong by believing in the ideology of your favoured religion? Pascal's Wager didn't really touch on ideology, but what about the people who believed in God and committed all sorts of crimes inspired by their beliefs? I do not believe any defender of religion would find it hard to explain where the inspiration to blow up people is coming from in all the suicide bombers. I would not claim that the Quran encouraged the idea of suicide bombing because they didn't have the capability for suicide

bombing in Muhammad's time, but I would state that the Quran and Bible encouraged dying to defend your religion. Of course, we have brave heroes who die defending their country, but you cannot compare religion to a country; your country is real and defends and shelters you, but religion does not. We can clearly see the horrors that come with religious beliefs, such as the mass violation of human rights inspired by the scripture. I think it makes a lot of difference; it may not make any difference once you're dead but makes a hell of a lot of difference to you and the people around you when you are alive.

Moreover, Pascal's proposition is absurd as it also supposes that his god is the only correct god. According to some estimates, there are close to ten thousand gods invented by humans across cultures and history. It's not as simple a supposition as Pascal made it out to be. It probably would have been a better wager if the whole world believed in only one god and one religion. If we go by Pascal's proposition, then he is saying, 'Believe in one god out of ten thousand gods and hope you are correct. Otherwise, you will go to hell.' I must admit that if there is a God, atheists have no hope of avoiding hell because an atheist has a zero-in-ten-thousand chance of being right. If you take Pascal's proposition and stick with your god and the real god turns out to be Jupiter, you are going to hell along with Pascal, so his wager fails. We simply cannot live our lives on a wild gambit because you only have a one-in-ten-thousand chance of being correct, and you will have to live your entire life under a set of rules and principles that may not even be correct – such a waste.

Let's discuss this claim of 'not making any difference' in a little more detail by understanding the baggage of religion. If we adopt method B and assume Pascal's Wager is correct, believing in God to save ourselves from an eternity burning in hell, we will have to abide by the rules of this God. I shall only discuss the Islamic God in the rest of the discussion, but that Islamic God is not that different from the Judeo-Christian God. By believing in the Islamic God, I also have to believe that I should not listen to music, question the scientific teachings of the Quran, not allow women of my family to go out

without a male relative, discriminate against homosexuals, chop off the hands of thieves, etc. The majority of Muslim scholars agree that the music and pictures of living creatures are acts of the devil and Allah does not like them. Modern Muslims do not agree with this consensus, and I shall now call all these modern Muslims hypocrites and the Taliban the true Muslims. The Taliban actually practice Islam in its true form: they banned music, movies, and pictures and killed adulterers, homosexuals, and even rape victims. You would see tons of modern Muslims who condemn the Taliban and defend Islam by claiming that the Islam of the Taliban is not true Islam. For these cherry-picking, hypocritical Muslims, I would simply ask them to read hadiths such as the following:

From among my followers, there will be some people who will consider illegal sexual intercourse, the wearing of silk [clothes], the drinking of alcoholic drinks, and the use of musical instruments as lawful. (Bukhari, volume 7, book 69, no. 494)

Although there are some Muslim scholars who debate issues such as what type of music is allowed, all of them agree that a female cannot sing in front of a male audience. None of the songs that involve non-religious romanticism are allowed as they encourage profanity. In today's world, everyone who had ever listened to Noor Jehan, a famous Pakistani singer, would go straight to hell because she sang a lot of romantic songs in front of men. However, since I am buying Pascal's idea of believing in God along with all his rules, I shall live a life without any music created or sung by a female or any romantic song sung by a male.

Thanks to Pascal's Wager, I now believe in Allah and all his rules and know the other 9,999 gods are false. I will not look at any picture, moving or still, that depicts any living creature in it. Consider the following hadiths:

The severest of penalties on the Day of Resurrection will be given to image makers. (Sahih Muslim and Sahih Bukhari)

A soul will be created for each image he made, and it will punish

him in hellfire. (Sahih Muslim)

Every image maker will be in the Fire. (Sahih Muslim)

This is the reason why Muslims get so worked up about the cartoon of Muhammad. Muhammad absolutely hated the concept of image-making and promised the severest of hellfire. Maybe Muhammad wasn't very photogenic. Some Muslim scholars have modified these direct teachings by arguing that a picture taken by camera cannot be put in the same category as a drawing since it is the reflection of an image as opposed to the creation of an image. Salafi scholars, however, prohibit any type of picture, whether drawn or photographed. In either case, this does not require any further debate and is conclusively evident that a picture of any living creature, moving or still, drawn or captured, is prohibited in Islam. Being a true and non-hypocritical Muslim, I shall not look at the paintings of Da Vinci or watch any movies of Steven Spielberg of Hollywood or Shah Rukh Khan of Bollywood.

If you follow method B, you are free to question what is wrong about drawing paintings or even looking at them. Well, you are free to do that, but since I'm following Pascal's proposition here, I will choose method A, and I will not indulge in critical thinking; otherwise, I'll burn in hell forever.

Being a true Muslim, I shall now enforce the law of the Allah, Sharia law. I cannot imagine how frightening it would be, living in a country where Sharia law is enforced, but since I now believe in Allah, I have to surrender my fears and personal interests to Allah and his law. I should take part in stoning a woman who claims she was raped. Obviously, in today's world and advances in forensic science, it is somewhat easier to prove that rape has taken place, but following Sharia law, a rape victim needs four independent witnesses to prove that they were actually raped. I just wonder, why couldn't Allah simply say that if it is unclear, then do not stone anyone at all? If there were four independent male witnesses or eight female witnesses (a woman's evidence is considered half of that of a man), then surely, they would have stopped the rape. This requirement for four witnesses came from when Muhammad's wife Aisha was accused of cheating on Muhammad. Three witnesses

confirmed this; however, Muhammad did not want to believe it and asked for four witnesses. Since there were only three witnesses, he didn't stone Aisha to death.

When Muhammad was deciding the fate of Aisha over the cheating allegations, all of a sudden, on a dry wintry day, Muhammad started sweating as a divine revelation came, and he said, 'O Aisha, Allah has declared you are innocent!' (Sahih Bukhari, volume 5, book 59, no. 462).

And those who accuse chaste women and then do not produce four witnesses, lash them with eighty lashes and do not accept from them testimony ever after. And those are the defiantly disobedient ... (Quran 24:4)

In the case of Muhammad and his beloved wife Aisha, he made up a new rule and actually used four witnesses in favour of the woman as he didn't want to stone her. You must be thinking that this incident clearly works in the favour of a woman; however, the key point is the man involved was not asked to confirm or deny his involvement in the affair.

If a man confesses to rape, he will be punished, but if a woman accuses a man of rape but he claims it was consensual, then both of them are punished. Even if only three witnesses give evidence in favour of the victim, the evidence is not enough. By the own admission of the victim, it has been confirmed that sexual intercourse did take place; hence, they should be punished accordingly. If both were married at the time of the event, the defendant and the claimant must both be stoned to death. Since I am a believer of Allah and his law, I must not question it and actively take part in stoning these terribly sinful people.

Even if there is no rape involved, what is so terrible about two people having sex in private? If sex was such an evil act, why did Allah create this process and not asexual reproduction in humans?

I shall also kill my fellow human beings who do not believe in Allah if they do the following:

- A. They attack my country.
- B. They pose any danger to my religion by spreading the views of a society that is not compatible with Allah's favoured society.

I can understand situation A as dying for your country is promoted in all societies, but situation B has major problems. Consider the following Quranic verse:

And fight them until there is no fitna and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah. And if they cease, then indeed, Allah is Seeing of what they do. (8:39)

This verse is so dangerous that even hardliners like the Taliban have trouble enforcing it. The opinion is divided amongst Muslim scholars, but as I am a devout Muslim, it is enticing me to defend and promote Islam by any means necessary.

How about this one?

Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture – [fight] until they give the *jizyah* willingly while they are humbled. (Quran 9:29)

Jizyah is more like an infidel tax. If you are a non-Muslim living in a Muslim country, you have to pay *jizyah*. Just imagine if Australia implemented a non-Christian tax for Muslims.

I would like to share a story from my childhood about a man who is well known for his terrorist activities. I was around 15 years old, and at that point, although I used to go to a mosque, I was beginning to see some serious flaws with the ideology I was being forced to believe in. My father is a moderate Muslim and made a friend by the name of Moazzam, who also seemed rather moderate, but later, we found out his views were not that different from those

held by the Taliban. He tricked my father in going to Azad Kashmir in Pakistan. We had heard a lot about the beauty of this place, so we quickly agreed to go there along with a hundred other travellers. My father naively thought that this would be some type of luxury holiday trip, but when we jumped in the bus, we realised something was not quite right. As we went further into the trip, we realised that this was no holiday; it was a religious indoctrination trip, a jihadi recruitment effort, so to speak.

Eventually, we reached Azad Kashmir through treacherous terrain and beautiful valleys. When we reached our destination, all the travellers were dumped at a very beautiful picturesque hillside, crowded by hundreds of bearded men armed with weapons. With no GPS or even a map, we were not sure exactly where we were but were told that we were very close to the 'line of control', the border between Indian and Pakistani Kashmir. This was my first and gladly last experience of the jihadi group called Lashkar-e-Taiba. This organisation's sole enemy was India, and while I was not a big fan of India, all the stories the Indian media had been propagating in Pakistani media started to appear truer than Pakistan's version. At this point, my father understood the true gravity of the situation and told his friend he would like to take his son back to Lahore as he did not think it was a suitable environment for a 15-year-old. Moazzam assured my father that everything would be all right, and there was no way he could go back since the next bus would not leave until the following day.

We were dressed for summer, but the temperature still dropped close to zero degrees Celsius. I must admit I felt very welcome and was treated very nicely by these men who, despite limited resources, gave me warm clothes and food. We ate together in big plates called *paraats*, where three to four men would eat with their hands from the same *paraat*. Apparently, eating together from one giant plate increased brotherhood, but I found this uncomfortable and did not eat anything until the following day. We spent the night in a room not large enough to accommodate the one hundred men sleeping there. We all slept together on the floor under the quilts called *razai*. I didn't like this experience either and told my father that there was no way I was sleeping

there ever again. My poor father knew that his son was not quite used to living in such primitive conditions but could not do much and assured me that we were scheduled to leave the following day.

The next day, we were woken up by the noise of some terrible belting. We realised that a few men were waking up the sleeping men to offer the first prayer of the day. My father quickly got up and asked me to get up as well. Being rather small in stature, I told my father that I would simply hide under the *razai*. My father did not want to argue with me and attract any attention, so he simply walked to the mosque.

After I woke up, we were told that the great leader of the Lashkar-e-Taiba would address us and all our questions would be answered. For legal reasons, I cannot name him, but you can make a good guess who he is. He came in a military helicopter and some very softly spoken, rather polite men greeted us. Since it was a long time ago, I will not quote him but will summarise what he said.

Addressing the young and old Muslim men, he told us how Pakistan and Islam needed us. It was at this time that my father realised not only was this a fundraising stunt, but also, the Lashkar was actually recruiting young Muslim boys. He first told us how *kaafir* (infidel) Hindu soldiers were raping and murdering our Muslim sisters and brothers in India and how it was our religious and national duty to help them. He told us how highly holy warriors are regarded in Islam, and if we are killed in the war for Allah, we go to heaven with beautiful virgins at our disposal. As I said earlier, I was beginning to doubt religion but did not have a solid opinion about the concept of God. He then demonstrated how a rocket-propelled grenade is fired. We were instructed to keep our mouths open so the sound of the RPG wouldn't burst our eardrums. We were then shown a live training exercise of holy warriors called *mujahedeen*. The exercise showed how *mujahedeen* rescued their fellow *mujahedeen* from the abduction of evil Hindu Indian soldiers. The firepower used was so loud and aggressive that I must admit I did see some charm in it. We think we can develop a good idea about war and

gunfights by watching Hollywood movies, but this experience was so different; the sound of ammunition is enough to overwhelm anyone. After this, he addressed us for the final time and pleaded with the audience to sign up and take part in this holy war against India. By this point, I was brainwashed and ready to fight and die for my country and newly found religion.

When the man with a register came to my father, my father told him that he would think about it. When the recruiter insisted and tried to ask why he need to think about such a simple decision, my father said he would rather send his son to the Pakistan Army to fight the Indian Army. The great leader overheard it and lectured my father on how the Pakistani Army is full of traitors, cowards, and un-Islamic, alcohol-drinking soldiers. He told us how seventy thousand Pakistan Army soldiers surrendered to India in now-Bangladesh in 1971. I found it rather odd, given he came in a military helicopter and obviously had the support of Pakistani military, yet he was bad-mouthing them publicly. He concluded that if Pakistan is to get Kashmir back from India, then it is not the Pakistan Army that would get it back but the *mujahedeen*. By this point, I started arguing with my father that I wanted to sign up and live here. This made my father very angry, and this was the first time he showed courage and said that under Pakistani law, I was not an adult, so I fell under his supervision. He left and did not press me any further, but I noticed some of his recruiters keeping an eye on me. My father did not let me out of his sight for a single moment until we left that place.

When I got back to Lahore and was reintroduced to music and movies, it did not take me long to shrug off the spell this great leader had cast upon me, but I still wonder whether I would be alive today had I been recruited. It still fascinates me to think how a child, even with an agnostic mind and modern education, was actually inspired to join a holy war in a matter of minutes. How easy would it be to prepare a child educated in a *madrasah* (religious school) to blow himself up in a holy war? I experienced this firsthand, so it did not surprise me when I first watched the planes crashing into the World Trade Center some two years later. A lot of my friends at the time questioned

how someone could kill themselves for a cause they were not likely to see the final result of, but it was easy for me to comprehend. One of my second cousins volunteered to fight the holy war against the United States and ran away from home. We later heard that he called his mother in Lahore and told her how sorry he was to run away and that wanted to come back home. He never returned. The great leader of Lashkar-e-Taiba is now wanted by India and the United States and has a bounty of ten million dollars on his head. Having experienced him firsthand, I feel terribly saddened when I see some of the most respected thinkers and intellectuals in Pakistan call this man a very peaceful Muslim.

Luckily, my father or I had not heard about Pascal's Wager; otherwise, in our blind belief in Allah, I would have been recruited and possibly been dead for almost two decades by now. Believing in anything without evidence causes immense problems. When you believe in a religion, you make yourself available to believing in anything with no actual evidence behind it. There is a belief in the 'evil eye' in Eastern cultures, which is a look of envy or dislike towards its victim that results in damage (if it is a non-living thing), injury, or death. Different cultures have different solutions to avoid the evil eye, such as prayers in Islam and some rituals in Hindu culture.

The belief goes that if you buy a new car and it looks very nice, you must not admire it too much as the people who envy or dislike you will have their evil eye on this object, and it will end up being stolen or destroyed. According to this belief, even your loved ones can unknowingly have an evil eye on your new property, so if you are a Muslim, you are supposed to say *mashallah* (with the will of God) or recite the Surah Al-Naas or Al-Falaq prayers. On the other hand, if you are Hindu, then you should do *aarti*. Similar prayers and religious activities are carried out for humans as well.

In Hindu culture, followers of this belief also hang something supposedly ugly next to this new object. The idea is that this 'ugly' object will divert the evil eye from its main target (a beautiful person or object) to itself, sparing it from destruction. Pakistan has a lot of traditions adopted from Hindu culture

because of living side by side with Hindus for over a thousand years. I cannot say it is a bad thing as it is certainly better to know that Pakistani culture is more influenced by Hindu than Arab culture. This might be the only reason why the Pakistani Muslim majority do not want Sharia law in their country.

I was watching a famous Pakistani show called *Hasb-e-Haal*, and in an episode on 3 May 2012, the host of the program started making fun of people who avoid the evil eye by adopting Hindu remedies, such as hanging a shoe on a new car or putting a black spot on their faces. He then lectured about how Pakistanis are Muslims and they should only pray to Allah to avoid the evil eye. The irony in this whole saga was that here was a man who believes in something superstitious making fun of another culture who also believe in something superstitious, and he thinks he is somehow smarter. It would have made more sense if the host had made fun of all the people who believed in superstitions, but I suppose that once you start believing in something as superstitious as religion, you open yourself to believing in just about anything without evidence.

O you who have believed, do not take your fathers or your brothers as allies if they have preferred disbelief over belief. And whoever does so among you – then it is those who are the wrongdoers.
(Quran 9:23)

This verse instructs Muslims not to be friends with those who do not believe in Allah, even if they are your father or brother. Religion causes not only division but also hatred for those who do not agree with your personal beliefs. Imagine if I cut out my family members simply because they prefer socialism over capitalism or vice versa or they followed a cricket team that I don't like.

Most people do not believe in fairies, but they do believe in demons. I was wondering why fairies are not as believable as the other equally unjustified entities. The only reason I could think of was fear. You can try this experiment yourself and make a lot of money out of it. Tell someone random to forward an email to as many people as possible as it will help whatever

cause you may have and God will bless them. You will not have much luck in spreading your message. On the other hand, add a line at the end of your email; put something like 'If you do not forward this to at least twenty friends, someone very close to you will die in agonising pain' or something similar. Your message will reach a lot more people. What did we change here? Regardless of what religion people believe in, they do not care so much about the blessing of God as they do about his wrath. This is religion's number-one tactic: it makes people believe through fear and intimidation. Humans have made such comfortable lives for themselves that they do not fear natural predators anymore, but they still need something to fear. To exploit this weakness, some cunning men came up with religious ideologies. I wonder how successful major religions would have been if there was no concept of hell.

In conclusion, since it is wiser to believe in God and his rules, I would have never heard of Madonna or Noor Jehan, watched Tom Hanks or Shah Rukh Khan, and instead, I would have stoned a lot of men and women to death, possibly waged a war on other humans for someone's political or economic greed and probably died prematurely, hated and separated from my own family members because of their lack of belief. Pascal suggests that if you are wrong in believing in God, then it does not make any difference. It makes a hell of a lot of difference if the belief in God turns out to be wrong. The last few pages do not disprove God but certainly prove that the price we pay for believing in a non-existent or incorrect god (Christian if you're a Muslim or Hindu if you're a Jew etc.) is immeasurably large. Am I expected to live my life with so much unnecessary baggage over some scripture written by men in caves thousands of years ago with zero evidence?

Islam can be blamed for all the above-mentioned problems, but what about other baggage that is not exclusive to Islam? What about beliefs like magic or ghosts and demons? My partner's sister is Catholic and is always telling the rest of us how she communicates with 'spirits'. I tried to have a rational conversation with her about her spirits but could not get anywhere. Her mother was a born-again Christian and a lovely person who came across as a

very rational human being. On 19 June 2012, at around 8:00 p.m., we had an earthquake in Melbourne. As soon as it was over, my partner received a call from her mother, who told my partner that the whole house was shaking, and she was too frightened to go to her daughter's room. When my partner asked her if the earthquake frightened her, she replied, 'No, I thought the spirits had attacked [my] daughter's room.' Of course, when her rational self returned, she realised it was just an earthquake. Luckily, Western education and culture made it easy for her to snap out of it, but it does not stop superstitions.

There must be a reason why Westerners are far less superstitious compared to their Eastern counterparts. My auntie in Pakistan is very religious; I was talking to her over Skype once when she asked me if I had heard about the woman who turned into a snake after blaspheming the prophet Muhammad. I replied I had not heard about this but I would look it up. The video is still up on YouTube, and you can search it with 'woman turns to snake during haj'. Before I looked it up, I asked my auntie what she thought about it, and she instantly replied there was a likelihood of something like that happening when you insult the great prophet. I asked where she had heard it, and she replied she had heard it from another teacher at school (my auntie is a high-school teacher). She said the teachers were so frightened that they warned her not to even look at it. I told her that if something like this had happened, the world media would have been after this story. I looked it up and forwarded the link to my auntie, telling her it was phony, but she remained fifty-fifty about it. Luckily, these days, you can do your own research rather than believing in whatever has been told to you.

Just yesterday, my mother fell for a hoax called 'the Well to Hell', which was invented by some Russian Christians to demonise atheists in the early nineties. The hoax said apparently, there was a 'scientific project' going on in Siberia where they dug up a hole some fourteen kilometres deep, and when they got to the bottom of it, they heard the screams of millions of people in agonising pain. The project was being led by a Mr Azzacov, who then further investigated by throwing in heat-sensitive microphones to record these tortured souls. Of course, Azzacov, who was an atheist, immediately turned

into a hell-believing Christian. This was obviously a hoax as there is no known Mr Azzacov and no fourteen-kilometre deep hole in Siberia, and finally, the screams recorded were mainly from the movie *Baron Blood* with some little add-ons. Obviously, my mother showed me the video from the Muslim perspective and asked me to convert back to Islam as there definitely is a hell. Before educating my mother on the hoax, I asked her if I should become Christian since Mr Azzacov became a Christian. To my surprise, she said, 'Sure. At least you will believe in a God.' I asked her if she would become Christian too, and as expected, she refused. I had to tell her that it was a hoax and the screams she had heard were from *Baron Blood*. She realised it was a hoax and accepted it, but her belief in heaven and hell is still as strong as ever.

Even these superstitious people would laugh if today a man claimed that he jumped on a winged horse and flew from Mecca to Jerusalem or if there was a man who turned water into wine and raised the dead, but they are willing to believe in something that allegedly happened thousands of years ago without thinking about the evidence. Just like you can associate discrepancy, conflicting arguments, and ever-changing theories with science, you can associate superstition, lack of freedom, and lack of pleasure with religion. The baggage of science leads us to new inventions and better lives, but I fail to see anything good coming from the baggage of religion.

The entirety of Pascal's Wager revolves around the central claim of a perceived fear of hell's existence. Yes, it is reasonable to agree with God's doctrine once we've established God has hell in store for those who don't agree with him; however, there is absolutely no evidence of this God. Any decision based on a perceived fear is simply not worth making, and deciding to believe in a God just because of the perceived fear of being tortured in hell for eternity is simply not a decision worth considering. We wouldn't stay at home and miss an important meeting or exam because of the perceived fear of getting killed in a car accident, yet Pascal's Wager is telling us to live our entire lives according to myths thousands of years old, just in case you burn in hell.

CHAPTER 4

The God Hypothesis

Either God can do nothing to stop catastrophes like this, or he doesn't care, or he doesn't exist. Therefore, God is either impotent, evil, or imaginary. Take your pick, and choose wisely.

— Sam Harris

Billions of people believe in different gods they believe created the universe. One of the most common arguments theists use is 'Well, you don't know this and that, so God did it'. This argument is called the 'god of the gaps'. The ancient Greeks didn't know how sea storms worked, so they created a god for sea weather called Poseidon; then came the Romans, who also didn't understand how the sea worked, so they invented a god called Neptune. Today we know how sea storms work, so Poseidon and Neptune are no longer needed; they are dead gods like their predecessors.

One of the greatest minds of modern science, Sir Isaac Newton, believed in God. He was a genius who invented calculus because he wanted to work out the movement of the planets, and he succeeded. But when the calculations became complicated and he couldn't work out the orbits because of the gravity of multiple undiscovered planets, he gave up and simply said God did it. Today we have sophisticated physicists and mathematicians, and we can work out the gravitational effects of all the planets involved, so we no longer need Newton's God. I wonder if Newton would have solved the problem had he not come to the conclusion that God did it.

In today's world, theists say you cannot explain the origin of life, so God did it. History suggests that the genius of some brilliant humans eventually answers the difficult questions, so in one or two hundred years (or maybe a lot sooner), some scientist is going to explain the origin of life – and then

what? Your God will once again no longer be needed.

Belief in God stops you from finding the answers; after all, if you can't work out something, you can simply say that God did it instead of trying to find the true answers. You have to wonder why one and a half billion Muslims cannot give us any Nobel Prize-winning scientists. Abdus Salam is the only Muslim physicist to win a Nobel Prize. Where are the rest of them? Funnily enough, he was an Ahmedi, and dominant sects of Islam like Sunnis and Shias don't consider Ahmedis Muslims. I can tell you they won't be winning any Nobel Prizes in medicine because if you think the Adam and Eve story is correct and evolution is incorrect, you won't be making any big discoveries anytime soon.

Now let's analyse the mind of a theist. They believe everything was created by God – by magic, of course. We know the universe started with the Big Bang 13.8 billion years ago. The Quran says the following:

It is He who created the heavens and earth in six days and then established Himself above the Throne. (57:4)

So let's forget about the six-day fallacy and assume for a moment that Allah's day is as long as some Muslims now claim, i.e. one and a half billion years (even though it doesn't say that anywhere). So Allah waits almost another nine billion years, and then Earth shows up. I wonder what Allah was doing in those nine billion years. He must be terribly bored, watching stars be born and die, planets colliding with one another, black holes swallowing other stars, and galaxies colliding. He had plenty of time to see all that.

Then we have Earth around 4.6 billion years ago or some nine billion years after the creation of the universe; the first simple microbial life takes another eight hundred million years to appear. This microbial life doesn't change much for another 1.8 billion years when the first multicellular eukaryotes show up. They are a lot more exciting than simple unicellular organisms. God must still be awfully bored in those 1.8 billion years of no serious action. He is probably thinking, 'Let's spice things up!' He waits another billion years, and simple sexually reproducing organisms show up. He watches simple

organism porn for another half billion years before he gets bored of that and decides to create complicated animals. He then waits another five hundred million years before evolving arthropods. Some Muslims and Christians would be thinking, 'All lies.'

Now we are at five hundred million years ago, and humans (the eventual plan of this benevolent God) are still nowhere to be found. Now God watches these animals be born, eat one another, and die for another five hundred million years. Dinosaurs come and go, T-Rexes terrorise triceratops countless times, and then a meteor hits Earth and kills all the dinosaurs. That is one crazy extended edition of *Jurassic Park* that went on for about five hundred million years.

Like everything else he's done so far, he eventually gets bored of all that and thinks for another sixty-five million years to come up with something interesting. Some two to three hundred thousand years ago, the first *Homo sapiens* appeared in the African continent. Countless humans are born and die; they hunt other animals, and sometimes they are hunted. Countless women die during childbirth; countless men die while they are hunting big game. The average life span is thirty years. Then two hundred and ninety five thousand years are gone, and all of a sudden, guys like Noah and Abraham and then Moses and Jesus and then Muhammad start showing up. And obviously, Muslims claim there are thousands of other prophets in between the major ones, but we have no proof of any of that. But to cut a fourteen-billion-year-long story short, now all of a sudden, this God starts taking an interest in what we eat, what we drink, who we have sex with, *how* we have sex, and how we clean up our private parts after excreting our bodily wastes. This grand God, creator of billions of galaxies, master of all life forms on Earth, king of the seas and the skies, is so petty that when you don't acknowledge his greatness or are oblivious to his existence, he gets so angry that he throws insults like a petty human and whinges about them. He sends books that put books like *Mein Kampf* to shame; let's just look at how he feels about non-believers only in our favourite book, the Quran.

According to Allah, non-believers are feral creatures who eat like beasts [91](#); they are practically apes [92](#); not only apes – let's also call them pigs [93](#). No, he's not done yet; he wants to call non-believers some other animal too. Yes, they are asses [94](#); he's now running out of examples, so he calls us just the vilest of the animals [95](#), just like a little school boy; when he can't get it his way, he calls his opponents losers [96](#). Non-believers also have this wicked disease in their hearts [97](#). They are cruel and hard-hearted [98](#). Their hearts are impure [99](#). They are deaf [100](#) and blind [101](#). They are just dumb and stupid [102](#). They are dirty and impure [103](#); not just that, but also, they are actually scum [104](#). They are also cruel and unjust [105](#). They are basically the worst of the worst men [106](#). They are the lowest of the low [107](#). They are sinful liars who always lie [108](#). They follow whatever is false in the world [109](#). Poor loving Allah does not love them [110](#); in fact, he actually forsakes them [111](#). The merciful Allah brings down destruction on them [112](#), curses them [113](#), and despises them [114](#), [115](#).

If any individual used this attitude towards their enemy, ex-partner, ex-best friend, or any other person they hate, you would call them anything other than good, no matter what has been done to them. Non-believers have not done anything to this god; they haven't raped or murdered him or killed his children or anything, yet he is full of hate and hell-bent on destroying them, either with curses or through practical punishment. What kind of character is this god that one and a half billion people worship? I understand most Muslims don't understand Arabic and therefore don't understand the message of this god who is full of contradictions and hatred, but what about Arab Muslims? Maybe they read all these verses separately, and when good is mixed with bad, they ignore the bad. This is why it is important to cherry-pick the bad bits out of religion to understand how bad it truly is. We only need to look into the bad bits of any doctrine to find out how bad it can be. If the Quran is the word of God, we shouldn't find any bad bits in it but we find plenty of them.

[The Character of God](#)

The God described by the Quran and the founder of Islam, Muhammad, is not much different from that of the Judeo-Christian God. Just like the god of the other two Abrahamic religions, this god gets angry very easily and doesn't like the freedom of women (making her male counterpart her master), resulting in the significant abuse of women in the least-educated Muslim societies. He is an extreme punisher and very undemocratic. My arguments may offend you, but please continue reading with an open mind and adopt method B by reading the premise of the argument and coming to your own conclusion. Now let us go one by one through some of the traits of our most beloved Abrahamic God.

Angry

Is my God not an angry God? Does your God not get angry when someone doesn't do what he has asked them to do through scripture? I will not argue whether having sex outside of marriage is right or wrong, but I will argue whether it is all right for a god, the creator of the entire universe of billions of billions of stars with hundreds of billions of galaxies, to get angry with a tiny individual for having sex outside of marriage, a God who gets angry so much that he chooses stoning, one of the most barbaric and violent of punishments on Earth, and hellfire in the afterlife. How can one argue that God isn't angry? After all, what is so wrong with sex outside of marriage that it deserves such a brutal punishment? What difference does a piece of paper make that it angers or upsets God so much? Obviously, there is nothing wrong when two people have sex outside of marriage; no volcanoes erupt, no earthquakes grind buildings to the ground, or no sky starts to fall. These geological or cosmic events do not see a marriage certificate before wreaking havoc. Furthermore, there is a famous verse in the Quran that says,

Shall I inform you of [what is] worse than that as penalty from Allah? [It is that of] those whom Allah has cursed and with whom He became angry and made of them apes and pigs and slaves of Taghut. Those are worse in position and further astray from the sound way. (5:60)

Now clearly, Allah is angry with the Jews for not accepting Muhammad as a prophet. Why is Allah so concerned with a few millions Jews (possible only a few hundred thousand when this verse was recited by Muhammad) that he gets angry and starts threatening them with his wrath, just like he turned previous generations of rebels into pigs and apes? What could these Jews have done that was so evil? The Jews gave refuge to Muhammad in Medina when he had to run away from Makkah. The main distinction between Judaism and Islam is that Jews do not consider Muhammad a prophet. I would ask the readers to question that if Jews don't consider Muhammad a prophet, who is affected by this? Obviously, it would be Muhammad and his ideology because he would have fewer followers and more opposition. Wouldn't it be safe to conclude that Muhammad might have penned this verse to propagate his ideology? Even if Muhammad had not made up this verse, what would be so terrible in not believing Muhammad was being the last prophet? Do we start condemning people when they follow a political leader we don't follow? Imagine a world where Hillary Clinton's supporters started killing the Trump supporters or a world where all Imran Khan's supporters threatened to kill anyone who would not vote for him. Obviously, it is a horrific, scary thought, and none of us (apart from the Taliban and ISIS) would want to live in that society, yet almost all modern, moderate Muslims expect the Jews and Christians from 1,400 years ago to live in that undemocratic world, and they condemn them to hellfire. Some Muslims say that Muhammad didn't kill or order the deaths of those who didn't believe in him. I shall answer that later when I discuss Muhammad as we are only discussing the character of Allah at this point.

Hatred for Women

In Islamic tradition, the most famous rhetoric you get is that 'Islam is the only religion that gives women equality'. Muslims believe that when a good, pious man dies, he goes to heaven and gets seventy-two virgins, but when a good, pious woman dies, she goes to heaven and gets her own husband. My partner once joked (or at least I hope she joked) that she's glad she's not Muslim because she can't stand me in this life, let alone for all eternity. Any

person who can think for themselves would question why, even in heaven, men get special treatment – and not only by a little but seventy-two times.

Since not even men are going to get seventy-two virgins, I won't dwell on this matter, but there are far more serious issues with women's rights in Islam that have real consequences. In Islam, men have been declared the masters of women. Christianity and Judaism are just as discriminatory, but people in the West have found a way around those primitive values. We can only thank modern secular humans in the West who fought for women's rights and won. As a result, we have women working alongside men, where they are recognised as equally important humans (at least more than before) and do not have to rely on men to provide for them. Unfortunately, in Muslim countries, we haven't had secular humanists to the same extent as the West, and as a result, women remain the slaves of their male counterparts. Although women in Muslim countries are in much worse shape than women in the West, I'm confident this is changing and will keep getting better as education replaces religious superstition and dogma.

I can understand why a man would enjoy being a Muslim; I can have four wives who obey me, I have my dinner served without any objections, and I am treated like a king. On the other hand, women have to obey their husbands and make sure he is never offended; they are also considered less intelligent than men and are beaten if they cross a line. Being a woman wanting to join or support Islam is like being a black man wanting to join or support a white supremacist group. The reason black men don't join white supremacist groups is because that ideology goes against their rights as humans, and women shouldn't support or join Islam because it goes against their basic human rights.

Let us start with a few of these verses in the Quran:

Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has made one of them excel the other and because they spend [to support them] from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient [to Allah and to their husbands] and guard in the

husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard [e.g. their chastity, their husband's property]. As to those women on whose part you see ill conduct, admonish them [first], [next] refuse to share their beds, [and last] beat them, but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means [of annoyance]. Surely, Allah is Ever Most High, Most Great.

— Surah An-Nisaa' [The Women] (4:34)

Your wives are as a tilth unto you; so approach your tilth when or how ye will ... (2:223)

Muslims say Islam is for all eternity, until the world comes to an end. Women in our world have demonstrated how they can live independently without any male support, so either Allah lied in his verse, or women have become smarter in the last 1400 years which Allah couldn't predict. Notice how the second part of the verse emphasises 'obedience' to Allah and husbands; where is the verse that states obedience to women? I couldn't find any, probably because Allah didn't think that women might demand equal treatment in the twenty-first century. Generously, this verse instructs man that if his wife doesn't obey him, he can first remind her of her duties, e.g. cleaning, cooking, and satisfying his sexual desires. If she refuses, for whatever reason, he may refuse to share a bed with her, which, for some women, would be more like a blessing than a punishment. But if she's already refusing to have sex with him and he is unable to rape her, we can go to the last step: beating her. Some Muslims say that a man is only told to gently beat her. What is gentle beating? Is it a slap instead of a punch, or is it a kick instead of strangulation? Some scholars say it's a *miswaaq*, which is like a little branch ancient Arabs used as a toothbrush. There are no reasons to believe that, but even if we did, beating your wife with a little branch is still degrading, humiliating, and not worth respecting.

These words in the Quran are so obvious that some women in Islam actually believe it is okay to be beaten by your master. I once had a conversation with a Muslim girl named Hadia from Pakistan who was a college-educated young

woman. She told me Allah made her father or husband responsible for her, hence he has every right to discipline her if she crosses the line and doesn't act the way he sees appropriate. Religious indoctrination takes away your self-esteem and dignity.

This is clearly Stockholm syndrome.

The second verse is pretty clear, and I will not argue against it as much; most Muslims are aware of it and try to sweep it under the carpet. This verse suggests that you can use your wife whenever or however you like, without regard to style, position, or time of day. The word *tilth* literally means cultivation of land. Basically, women are like cultivated land that you can use as baby-producing machines, just like we use land to produce crops. How you do it? Well, it's entirely up to you. In simple words, you can rape her if she doesn't feel like having sex with you; you are obligated to use your wife for your desires whenever you want.

I cannot imagine being a woman for one day in a world where everyone follows this instruction. Luckily, most Muslims are bad Muslims, which makes them better humans, and they don't take these verses seriously. Most Muslims I know do not rape their wives, nor do they see women as cultivated land made for them to produce babies. We choose one best possible judge or a prime minister out of hundreds of candidates. These people go through vigorous training and selection processes before they get to their position, but how easily has Allah made an ordinary man the master of another human being. No matter how smart this woman is, she will never be a man's master or his equal, and no matter how much of a buffoon he is, he is always the master to the women in his house.

What would happen if we picked the worst judge out of hundreds of candidates? Obviously, these incompetent people won't be able to fulfil their role. I shall now scrutinise this philosophy in a scenario where a woman gets married to a psychotic man. By Islamic doctrine, he is her master; no matter how right she is, she cannot win with him and ends up getting beaten on almost every issue she disagrees with him on. Some Muslims will say she can

ask for divorce. The statement itself is ridiculous as she has to *ask* for a divorce. Yes, being a woman, you cannot divorce a man; you actually have to ask for it, and in other words, you beg for it. If he chooses to affiliate with a racist political party, she must agree with him; otherwise, she will be considered a disobedient wife and open herself to beatings. Now some Muslims will think I am being terribly prejudiced because a woman never has to put up with a man who doesn't obey Allah's command. Although some commands like allowing you to rape your wife is good enough for a man to be called evil, where is the system that liberates a woman from her murderous husband? I cannot begin to imagine how hard it would be for a woman to go to the *qazi* (judge) and tell him that her husband has murderous intentions towards someone else. Since her statement will only be equal to half that of man's, she would have to go home and confront a very angry, violent husband. This is not to say this is how most Muslims are; as I said earlier, most Muslims are bad Muslims, so they don't follow the Islamic teachings literally, but they instead deliberately ignore these terrible verses and pretend as though they do not exist. If every Muslim literally applied these verses in their personal lives, the above scenario would be a daily occurrence in every Muslim household.

A man becoming the master of a woman creates all sorts of problems, such as a woman not having a say in whom she marries because before marriage, her father is her master; if he chooses to marry his daughter to a psychotic, she has to obediently agree or get beaten up until she does. It is true that hadith have indicated that a girl should agree before marriage, but this obviously contradicts the man being the master, and since the Quran takes precedence over hadiths, as a true Muslim, you can go with this verse. If a man is convicted of a crime, he cannot or should not hold certain positions – e.g. judge, police officer, teacher – but the position as master of his women is never taken away from him. No matter how many infidels he's murdered, he gets to hold this position. Of course, Islam doesn't allow murderers to live because the punishment for murder is beheading, but what about milder crimes such as bribery or stealing? Even after serving his punishment and

after losing a hand (the punishment for stealing in Islam), he comes back to his wife and resumes his position as the master of his wife.

I fail to understand why Muhammad couldn't write something like the following:

God created men and women equally, and both should resolve their differences through discussions. When disagreements become unbearable, they should part ways. No doubt, Allah is just and most merciful.

The discrimination of women doesn't end here. In Islam, men are allowed to have four wives at a time, but women are not allowed to have more than one husband. There are all sorts of explanations behind this logic, but the most interesting one I came across was by Dr Zakir Naik of India. Dr Naik enjoys the support from his fellow Muslims, who give hysterical applause to almost anything he says in his lectures. In one of his YouTube videos, a young Hindu girl asked Dr Naik why men are allowed to have four wives. I had just heard about Dr Naik, and I was keen to hear his response, although I didn't expect much logic. Naik claimed that Allah knew there were more women than men in the world. He went on to ask what these 'excess women' were supposed to do, asking if they should all become public property, by which he meant prostitutes. I was disgusted by this as he was referring to the married, 'non-excess' women as the 'private property' of their husbands. Could he have picked a better word to insult women all over the world? Public or private, women are simply property in the eyes of Dr Naik, which is actually in line with the Islamic view. He actually gave references to back up his claim, saying the female population in countries like Germany, France, and the UK were higher than the male population. The whole crowd erupted with applause, and the poor Hindu girl shut up and sat down. Some rumours suggest that she later converted to Islam because of Dr Naik's brilliance, but I doubt it.

Since I had just heard of him, I didn't think his references would actually be blatant lies, but I was sceptical, so I decided to look them up. According to

the *CIA: World Factbook*, in Germany, there are 1.06 males for every 1 female at birth. At the age of 64, there are 1.02 males for every 1 female. In France, there are 1.05 males per female at birth and 1 male per female at the age of 64. In the UK, there are 1.05 males per female at birth and 1.02 males per female at the age of 64. It is only after the age of 64 when the female ratio increases, and this is solely because men don't live as long. Although I didn't think Dr Naik would say this openly in front of hundreds of people, to my surprise, he blatantly made this claim, which is obviously false. Muslims who use this reasoning to allow four wives are essentially claiming that back in those days when men used to die in huge numbers in wars, women were always more numerous than men.

First point: There is no data to suggest that at any point in history, there were four times as many women than men. It would have been very easy to verify as we have found many archaeological sites in ancient cities, and we have never observed women being significantly higher in number than men.

Second point: Even if we go by this idea of women being more numerous than men in ancient times (remember, we're using method B), it clearly is not the case in today's world. This would mean that the four-marriage rule applies only in ancient Arabia and not in the modern world. Would Muslim scholars be brave enough to abolish this tradition and licence for polygamy given that women are not as numerous as they supposedly used to be? I doubt it. This also suggests that Allah is not all that long-sighted as he clearly didn't know there would come a point when women would not be more numerous than men, another demonstration of how this was the word of a seventh-century Arabian man rather than the creator of billions of galaxies.

I doubt they will change because the reason for polygamy is *not* that there ever were more women than men but to keep men happy. What is better than selling imaginary rewards like heaven and virgins after death? Real women in the real world. Subjecting a woman to something as disgusting as hearing her husband having sex with another woman in the next room has no room in modern society. The sooner Muslims realise this, the sooner they can step

into the modern world with us. If the rumour is true, I wonder if that Hindu girl chose to do two minutes of research on the Internet before falling for Dr Naik's brilliance or if any of those applauding people actually thought about finding the answer for themselves. I hope they did do the research and invoked their critical thinking, but I think I'm being too optimistic.

Another reason Muslim apologists give in defence of having four wives is that men don't get pregnant and women do. If a woman has multiple husbands, how would the child know who the father is? Yes, it is laughable. Why not have one husband and one wife and remove this Earth-destroying dilemma? Moreover, these days, we can do a DNA test and work out who the father is. Again, this shows this God had no idea that one day we would have technology as credible as DNA testing. Does this look like the trait of the creator of billions of galaxies? Another demonstration of how Islam is not for all people of all times.

Pakistani law states that a man must obtain written permission from his wife before marrying a second, third, or fourth wife. Since Pakistan has so many corruption issues, I doubt this law is ever enforced. The condition is much worse in other Islamic countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, where a man doesn't need any permission from his wife to marry other women. He simply brings other women to his house and makes them all live together in 'harmony'.

Muslims argue that although Allah has given this luxury to men, it comes with strict conditions. One of the conditions is to treat them all wives equally, meaning if you buy fruits for one wife, buy them for the other wives as well, and you must not sleep with one wife more frequently than the others. This is even though Muhammad stopped sleeping with Sawda, his tall chubby African wife, because he didn't find her sexy enough, but let's ignore that. I wonder if equal treatment means that if you beat one wife for disobedience, you should beat the other three as well.

According to the Aurat Foundation in Islamabad, in 2009, in Pakistan alone, there were 8,458 cases of domestic violence in which 1,384 were murdered,

928 were raped, 683 committed suicide, and 604 women became the victims of honour killings. You must be thinking, 'That's not too bad for a country of 180 million people.' The experts believe this number is most likely twenty times higher as most cases go unreported because of social stigma.

Of course, 'nowhere' in the Quran does it say to rape women (unless it is your wife or a sex slave) or to murder them but would it be naive to suggest that the honour-killing mentality rises from the generally patriarchal philosophy of Islam? If women were not forced to be the subjects of men, would we still have honour killings? I don't think so because in Western society (where it is not considered shameful when a woman chooses her own husband), we have zero honour killings. Yes, women are murdered in the West, but are those murderers supported by the state or its ideology? Obviously not.

Muslim apologists defend the isolation of women by referencing the rape rate in countries like the United States and comparing it with that of Saudi Arabia. I will disregard this argument by reminding you that Sharia law demands four male witnesses to convict someone of rape; otherwise, it is only considered sex out of wedlock. It wouldn't be difficult to suggest that most victims leave the crime unreported; otherwise, as well as being raped, they may also be stoned to death.

Lastly, I would like to discuss the covering up of women in Islam. Islamic apologists say that if women were not made to cover their hair (or the entire face in Wahabism), then it would be hard for men to control themselves, resulting in increased rapes. Obviously, all Abrahamic religions consider sex as a vile and heinous act; therefore, it is best if we cover up women and hide them from the eyes of other men to reduce the chance of them having sex. This is a terrible way of living.

Imagine you buy a car and drive it around under a cover because you don't want the thieves to know it is a Mercedes and not a Kia. We make sure we have laws to protect our property, and we use immobilisers and car alarms to reduce the risk of car theft, but we don't drive cars under covers. With this

Islamic logic, one should never earn any money because other people will find out about it and want to rob you. Fear should never hold anyone back; all progress in human society has been achieved by overcoming fears. So why do Muslims allow themselves to kill women's dreams of being free from rape by putting bags over them? Yes, unfortunately, rape does happen, but covering up a woman is no guarantee of stopping it; punishing the rapists is. Shouldn't they make laws that will protect the rights of women and deliver strict punishments for those who rape women, just like we have done against thieves stealing our cars? Instead, Islam has actually made it safe for a man to rape a woman and get away with it.

There is ample evidence to suggest that homosexuals have always existed among us, so why not cover up all men as well in case a homosexual man gets aroused looking at a pretty man and ends up raping him? The argument of a man being better equipped than a woman to deal with his rapist is flawed as not all men are of equal strength. A homosexual might be stronger than the man he rapes. Ironically, recently Muslim cleric Murat Bayaral actually said men should grow beards because if they don't have beards, hornier men want to rape these unbearded men [75](#).

Why does God hate sex so much – or at least why so much outside of wedlock? There is no record in any of the religious books that Adam and Eve ever got married. If God hates sex so much, then why did he create reproduction through sex in most animal species? How is what two people or even groups of people do in private a concern to anyone?

In Pakistan, a woman's freedom to have sex is not supported because of a master's loss of control over his subjects. If a woman is free, meets a man, and has sex with him, her father will disapprove as it challenges his authority of choosing a man for her. I remember asking my friend when I was around 15 years old, why do we want to have sex with women but don't want others to have sex with our sisters? He simply said that this is just the way it is. We have labelled men with this *bayghairat* (shameless) mentality, which means it is okay to have sex with others, but we can't allow them to have sex with our

sisters or daughters. Instead of calling them hypocrites, we call them *ghairatmand* (honourable). As I grew older and gained a better understanding of the word *hypocrite*, I became of the view that it is okay for me to have sex outside of wedlock and it is also okay for my sister to have sex with whomever she likes, however she likes, whether married or not.

The unfair treatment of women against men doesn't end here; wait, there's more! That was just about the sexual liberation of women in Islam. What about other 'rights' of Muslim women? Let's look at some other misogynistic Quranic verses.

For the male, what is equal to the share of two females. (4:11)

So if you have a son and a daughter, when the father dies, the son gets two portions, and the daughter only gets one. This terrible verse keeps on going in other scenarios where women are always at a major disadvantage. There are various explanations given by Muslim apologists in defence of this unfair treatment. One of the most common ones is that a man (the son) is the leader of his household, and he has to look after his family, so he gets the lion's share. On the other hand, a woman (the daughter) is the responsibility of her husband, and he can bring the lion's share of inheritance from his side. I'll leave that to you to decide whether that is a fair or an unfair justification of this discriminatory behaviour condoned by Islam.

What about women's intelligence? Let's check out this verse:

And if there are not two men [available], then a man and two women from those whom you accept as witnesses – so that if one of the women errs, then the other can remind her. (Quran 2:282)

This verse is perfectly in line with Muhammad's quote:

The Prophet said, 'Isn't the witness of a woman equal to half of a man?'

Women said, 'Yes.'

The Prophet said, ‘This is because [of] the deficiency of a woman’s mind.’ (Bukhari, volume 3, book 48, no. 826)

Basically, it says two women are equal to one man. This verse has been used to indicate that women are mentally inferior to men. Amazing how the creator of billions of galaxies says that if one woman errs or forgets, then the other woman can remind her. What about if a man errs or forgets? Who is to remind him? Some Muslim apologists say that women are more likely to suffer from dementia than men; however, men do still suffer from dementia. Moreover, men and women suffer from dementia at later stages of their lives – and only a small percentage at that. So if a small percentage of the female population suffers from dementia at later stages of life and women are not alone in this disease, then how come only women pay the price of having their statements worth half of those of men? Obviously, Allah didn’t know these facts when he made this verse, but if he had, would it have changed his mind? Besides, why make a general law and include all women when we know that not all women suffer from dementia? This is like saying some women like chocolate and end up being obese, so let’s ban chocolate for all women!

As far as we know, the average IQ of women is the same as men. There are certain areas where men have better IQs and some areas where women have better IQs, but it’s more or less the same. The difference is more noticeable amongst different races than between the sexes. Modern studies have shown us that men and women have equal levels of intelligence, so Allah got it wrong again. These were just four Quranic verses; there are quite a few more, along with hundreds and hundreds of hadiths, that are systematically misogynistic and even worse than these verses. Without going further into hundreds of misogynistic hadiths, let’s look at just one of them:

The things which annul the prayers were mentioned before me. They said, ‘Prayer is annulled by a dog, a donkey, and a woman [if they pass in front of the praying people].’ I said, ‘You have made us [i.e. women] dogs. I saw the Prophet praying while I used to lie in my

bed between him and the Qibla. Whenever I was in need of something, I would slip away, for I disliked to face him.’ (Sahih Bukhari, volume 9, no. 490)

I don’t need to elaborate further as Muhammad’s child bride, Aisha, herself showed her objection at this view of Muhammad.

So we have established three basic rights for women in this glorious religion:

1. You can beat up your wife.
2. You can discriminate against her in favour of her male siblings in the case of property inheritance.
3. Women are mentally inferior to and dumber than men.

So the next time someone tells you that Allah gives rights to women, just educate them on these three basic facts. You will hear all kinds of justifications and mental gymnastics from the apologists, but you will find none of them remotely convincing.

Vengeful

This God is so obsessed with flattery that anyone who doesn’t acknowledge him in the world, he threatens to burn in hell for eternity. In the case of Islam, he wants to be prayed to five times a day and demands his followers fast for him and do a pilgrimage of Makkah at least once in their lives. Even worse, if you don’t believe in his existence, he will torment you and burn you in hell for eternity. Just check out some of the Quranic verses about this all-loving God:

Those who deny the Book and that with which We sent Our messengers – they are going to know. When the shackles are around their necks and the chains, they will be dragged in boiling water; then in the Fire, they will be filled [with flame]. (40:70–72)

What about this one?

These are two adversaries who have disputed over their Lord. But

those who disbelieved will have cut out for them garments of fire. Poured upon their heads will be scalding water. By which is melted that within their bellies and [their] skins. (22:19–20)

Not only will he burn and torture them for eternity, but also, he will actually enjoy watching it and make sniggering comments while they are being tortured.

Every time they want to get out of Hellfire from anguish, they will be returned to it, and [it will be said], ‘Taste the punishment of the Burning Fire!’ (22:22)

The only thing the above verse is missing is the evil ‘*Ha ha ha!*’ at the end. Hitler or Stalin probably never went to their victims and said, ‘Ha! Are you enjoying this torture now?’ Yet a billion Muslims think it is perfectly fine for the creator of everything to do just this. As Michael Shermer put it, would you go to an anthill and burn their colony if they didn’t come to you and praise you or if they didn’t bring you trinkets? I think even the most evil of us would not, yet the all-merciful and loving God sees nothing wrong with that.

There are close to five hundred verses specifically about hellfire for non-believers. There are close to thirty-six verses that ask men of Allah to fight against the non-Muslims to spread the one and true religion of Islam, yet people wonder where the Taliban and ISIS come from.

[Genocidal](#)

Not only does this God threaten to torture people in hellfire (which is obviously fictitious), but also, he isn’t shy about destroying civilisations on Earth over disagreements. The story of Lot is very famous; the Quran also didn’t mind taking this story from the Bible to show the nature of this God.

The story goes that there were men in Sodom who loved having sex with men. God sent three angels to the house of Lot (Lut in Islam). The men of Sodom wanted to rape these three beautiful male angels. Lot told the people of Sodom not to rape his guests but instead offered his beautiful daughters to

them. Since they were homosexuals, they turned down Lot's generous offer (at least this is how the story goes in the Bible). This actually shows how bad the biblical story is; would you offer your daughters to be raped to protect some beings made of fire? Well, this is exactly what the noble Lot did. 'Here, have my daughters to rape but leave my angel friends alone.' The Quranic story of Lut is slightly different. It first starts by making a claim that the people of Sodom were the first to practice homosexuality:

And [We had sent] Lot when he said to his people, 'Do you commit such immorality as no one has preceded you with from among the worlds? Indeed, you approach men with desire instead of women. Rather, you are a transgressing people.' (7:80–81)

So the people of Sodom were the first homosexuals on planet Earth. This claim is obviously false as we have recorded cases of homosexuality in pre-conquest Latin and North America [17](#). Evidence of the earliest gay couple was found from five thousand years ago in a cave in what is today Prague, Czech Republic. Obviously, these civilisations had no knowledge of the people of Sodom, at least until they were conquered in the fifteenth century and later. More importantly, it seems Allah had no knowledge of these civilisations as there is no mention of the unknown world anywhere in the Quran or Bible. Some historians suggest that Sodom and Gomorrah flourished around the Dead Sea along with Admah, Zeboim, and Bela [18](#). We don't have any evidence of Sodom and Gomorrah; however, Bela was definitely a city. If Sodom and Gomorrah existed, they probably existed around 2100 BCE. If we take the Quran's account, then homosexuality was first practiced in 2100 BCE or around 4,200 years ago, which is obviously false.

The interesting question, however, is if there were homosexuals in Sodom, was it necessary to destroy the whole city? We know the percentage of homosexuals is always a minority compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Regardless, this merciful God destroyed the whole city:

And We rained upon them a rain [of stones]. Then see how was the end of the criminals. (Quran 7:84)

Of course, we have no evidence of this story. Historians speculate that the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah would have been around where Jordan and Israel are today. It is likely that if they existed, this would be the best location; however, there are no active volcanoes around the area. The only volcano that could have caused this destruction is Mount Bental. Unfortunately for Muslim and Christian apologists, this is a dormant volcano and has been so for hundreds of thousands of years.

It is easier to make claims after the fact; for example, I can make all sorts of claims over the destruction of Pompeii and say my (fictitious) god Yahooru destroyed Pompeii two thousand years ago because the people of Pompeii wore red clothes more often than green ones and Yahooru doesn't like red. Even if the story of Lut was correct, simply making a story after the fact is no impressive feat.

Just like the story of Lot, the Quran also plagiarised the story of Noah with a few minor differences. In the Quran, there were ten generations between Adam and Noah according to this accepted hadith:

‘Had Adam been a Prophet?’

Prophet Muhammad answered, ‘Yes.’

The man asked, ‘How much time passed between him and Noah?’

Prophet Muhammad replied ‘Ten *qarn* [generations].’

(Sahih Ibn Hibban, hadith 6190)

The Quran does say Noah lived up to the age of 950, so it's safe to assume that the total period between Adam and Noah would have been roughly around ten thousand years. The Islamic claim is that since it was a very long time, the people of the world had forgotten the laws and rules set forth by Adam, and Satan had misguided people in the meantime. Since God failed to keep his people in check and couldn't communicate with people directly, he sent Noah to the rescue:

And We had certainly sent Noah to his people, [saying], ‘Indeed, I am to you a clear warner. That you not worship except Allah. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a painful day.’ (11:25–26)

If anyone made a claim like this today, you would obviously meet it with some scepticism, and the people Noah was addressing did the same:

So the eminent among those who disbelieved from his people said, ‘We do not see you but as a man like ourselves, and we do not see you followed except by those who are the lowest of us [and] at first suggestion. And we do not see in you over us any merit. Rather, we think you are liars.’ (11:27)

There is nothing wrong in asking what these people asked Noah. Instead of giving evidence to these people, Allah decided to destroy them and ordered Noah to build a boat.

And construct the ship under Our observation and Our inspiration and do not address Me concerning those who have wronged. Indeed, they are [to be] drowned. (11:37)

God is so vengeful that he orders Noah not to ask him to forgive these people, who simply want more evidence of his existence over the wild claims of an old man. But no, who can reason with this tyrannical, genocidal God? Not only is this God punishing sceptics over these wild claims, but also, he sees nothing wrong in destroying a whole world of animals who have nothing to do with this man-versus-God quarrel.

We said, ‘Load upon the ship of each [creature] two mates and your family, except those about whom the word has preceded, and [include] whoever has believed.’ (11:40)

Nice of God to save one pair of each animal, but what about the millions of animals who missed out on Noah’s life-saving boat? And why even save these animals? Couldn’t God create these animals again by waving his magic wand? He was probably more busy destroying animals than creating them.

Unlike Biblical traditions, Muslims are lucky that Muhammad didn't call it a worldwide flood, which is obviously not possible as there is not enough water on the entire Earth to submerge the whole planet.

Muslims and Christians claim that these stories teach us how we should live our lives. If you look at these stories neutrally, you can see if they teach anything, it is how cruel, unjust, and tyrannical this God is. He sees nothing wrong in destroying whole cities and civilisations over trivial things such as homosexuality and disbelief. If you have gays in your town, he will destroy the whole town. If you have atheists in your city, he'll flood the whole city, and not only will he kill the disbelievers, but also, he will kill all the animals in the area. By looking at the below verse, it seems this God is worse than Josef Stalin and Hitler on steroids.

And how many have We destroyed from the generations after Noah. And sufficient is your Lord, concerning the sins of His servants, as Acquainted and Seeing. (17:17)

[Simply Evil](#)

On 10 January 2018, Pakistanis woke up to the news of a 7-year-old girl named Zainab, who had been kidnapped and then raped, murdered, and dumped on the side of the road as a piece of rubbish. The whole country was shocked, and demonstrations erupted nationwide. Everyone started blaming the government for allowing a corrupt system where our children and women are not safe. To make matters worse, this innocent child was on her way to a madrasa to learn the Quran. Her parents were also in Makkah on a religious pilgrimage. So basically, this girl was better than those not-so-god-fearing children as she and her family were specifically dedicating their time for this Allah. Obviously, we should all be shocked and should force our governments to do more to make a better society for their citizens. But don't the majority of Pakistanis believe in Allah, who is omnipotent and can do anything? We blame only the government for corruption, but at least it didn't know the crime was being committed. This omnipotent God was sitting up on his throne in the skies, watching the whole ordeal, and did absolutely nothing.

Obviously, as atheists, we can't blame God, but how come people who believe in God don't question it? Those who question it are met with either strong criticism from 'scholars' or get vague pseudo-philosophical statements like 'God has given you free will'. This 'free will' explanation causes multiple problems, but most Muslims don't bother to question it. Why would this omnipotent and merciful God protect the free will of a paedophilic rapist and murderer over an innocent 7-year-old girl's free will to survive? Moreover, this free will falls apart when God actually violates the free will of 'bad humans' when he occasionally intervenes and performs miracles. We have all heard of examples of these 'miracles' when a victim of murder is magically saved by some divine intervention. Where is the non-violation of the free will of the murderer then? This is a clear example of the circular logic that Muslims and other theists use. When God does decide to intervene in some cases, it begs the question of how he decides to intervene. Sometimes he protects the free will of a murderer, sometimes he saves a morally corrupt person from getting murdered, and other times he does nothing to save an innocent, perfectly moral child from getting raped and murdered. Some Muslims also claim that this may be punishment from Allah, that maybe her parents were evil and Allah has punished them by allowing the murder of their young girl. Even if that is the case, why punish an innocent girl over the sins of her parents? It just doesn't make sense, yet two hundred million Pakistani Muslims see nothing wrong with this.

Some Other Problems with God

The whole notion of this omnipotent God creates a lot of problems. God has created us sick (fallible and immoral), yet he wants us to be healthy? It's like I make someone with one arm and give him the tasks that only people with two arms can do. God has deliberately made humans fallible but wants us to be infallible.

This God puts diseases in humans and then asks people to pray to him so he can heal them, obviously without evidence of anyone ever being cured. As people go to doctors to be healed, I wonder if these people are going against

God's will. If God has given you cancer, you should accept it as his will; why rebel against his wishes and desires?

This God wants to be worshipped so badly that if we don't suck up to him 24/7, he will burn and torture us for eternity. Okay, fine, maybe my creator is an egomaniacal creature, but he doesn't even want to show any evidence of his existence. The best way to tell us about his existence was 'revelations' to men who owned slaves and sex slaves and had child brides. Fine, he couldn't find better people, but why stop 1,400 years ago and expect all following subsequent generations to believe in it? Maybe he wanted to stop there, but why could he not come up with a better language than Arabic (in the Quran's case) to communicate with the rest of humanity, a language that gets distorted and misinterpreted so easily? He is okay with taking an interest in the sex life of Muhammad and sending revelation after revelation about who he should sleep with and who he should not, but he doesn't reveal himself to the noblest of people today who are going through doubts about his existence, doubts that will earn them a five-star stay in hell for eternity.

CHAPTER 5

The Character of Muhammad

It is rather easy to understand but hard to explain *why* most Muslims will actually think that Muhammad is the greatest role model for humanity. ‘Ignorance’ is the only answer I can think of to why. Let’s look at the life of Muhammad a little more in detail.

Violent

When I was a little boy growing up under the influence of Islam, I was told that Muhammad was so gentle and loving that he once attended to the ill woman who used to throw rubbish at him. Of course, this is a beautiful story, and one falls in love with that kind of person; the truth, however, is quite different. This story of a wicked woman who used to throw rubbish at Muhammad every day, who suddenly falls ill, does not exist anywhere, even in the most biased of Islamic literature. There are stories of people throwing rubbish at Muhammad’s door, but Muhammad never visited them. I was so shocked to hear the truth that when I first came across these results in my research, I almost had a nervous breakdown. I felt insulted, cheated, lied to, and violated when I actually found out that Muhammad had waged wars and been responsible for the deaths of many humans; these stories were simply not taught to us in Pakistani schools.

Muhammad’s first political victims were poets. When Muhammad was in the early part of his career and spreading his message of ‘God’, he received some fierce criticism and opposition. Instead of rock stars and actors, the most influential people of those times were writers and poets who could change the views of the masses. If you think about it, Muhammad was a great writer as well as he started one of the greatest revolutions in human society by writing a five-hundred-or-so-page book: the Quran. I shall now write about some of

those critics who lost their heads by merely expressing their opinions against a new political party called Islam.

According to Ibn-Ishaq's *The Life of Muhammad*, before Muhammad's hijra (emigration from Makkah to Medina), Al-Nadr bin al-Harith used to criticise Muhammad and once said, 'By God, Muhammad cannot tell a better story than I, and his talk is only of old fables which he has copied as I have.' Nadr is doing what all the politicians of today do – criticise their opponents. He is claiming that his storytelling skills are superior to Muhammad's, and since he wrote fiction, he's suggesting that the stories Muhammad is telling are not only fictitious but also actually by other writers. Nadr would pay for insulting Muhammad dearly; in the battle of Badr in 662 AD, Nadr was captured and ordered to be beheaded. It was common at that time that ransoms were demanded in place of the lives of the captured, but no ransom was put on Nadr's life, and he was executed. It is evident that Muhammad really disliked this poet ⁵. Another critic of Muhammad, Uqba bin Abu Muayt, was also captured and beheaded after the battle of Badr ⁶.

The murder of Al-Nadr started a chain of events where Muhammad systematically shut down all his opposition and critics through violence. Disgruntled at the murder of Al-Nadr, Abu Afak wrote a poem criticising Muhammad, so what did Muhammad do? He ordered his assassination and had him killed.

Upset at the murder of Abu Afak, Asma Bint Marwan writes a poem against Muhammad. Ibn Ishaq brags about Muhammad's wisdom by telling how the assassination of this poetess benefited Islam and that the whole tribe of Asma converted to Islam after her assassination. Asma wrote a poem criticising the pagans of Makkah for believing the message of a stranger (Muhammad) and not punishing him. When Muhammad heard about this, he asked, 'Who will rid me of the daughter of Marwan?' A member of the tribe of Asma volunteered to do the honour. He infiltrated Asma's house and found her asleep with a young child on her stomach. He gently removed the child and killed the sleeping woman ⁷. I loved how the writer wrote that this enforcer of

God's will 'gently' removed the child as if he's trying to tell us that the decision to kill the woman was a last resort. If this man was a barbaric, evil murderer, he probably would have killed the baby along with his mother. How generous of him. When the assassin Umayya came and told Muhammad what he had done, he asked if he would bear an evil punishment from the divine. Muhammad replied, 'Two goats won't butt their heads about her.' Asma had five sons, and her whole tribe converted to Islam after her death. Who says Muslims didn't spread Islam through terror?

Another interesting story of Muhammad's murderous rampage is that of Kab bin Al-Ashraf. Kab was a Jewish leader in Makkah who, after the destruction of Quraish, was disappointed and wrote some poems condemning Muhammad and Muslims. If you look at the poetry, it's rather mild; however, Muhammad would not take any criticism or opposition. He assembled a group of five assassins, one of them Kab's foster brother, Abu-Naila. Understanding the complications of the operation, Abu-Naila said, 'O Apostle of Allah, we shall have to lie in this matter.' The prophet replied, 'Say what you like. You are free in this matter⁸.'

As you can see, Muhammad didn't mind lying when it came to achieving his own ambitions. Lying is perfectly fine according to him as long as it suits you. This is a golden tool for politicians as they love to lie, so why not justify it using divine inspiration? Muslims will probably say we all lie and our governments lie all the time; however, governments don't claim to be the divine role model for all humanity.

Abu-Naila went to Kab's house and lied by expressing his displeasure at Muhammad's tactics, obviously lying to earn Kab's trust. This convinced Kab of Abu-Naila's defection. Abu-Naila offered to bring some weapons to Kab's house as a gift, to which he agreed. When night fell, Abu-Naila went along with his friend to the other three assassins and came back to Kab's house with some weapons, and they killed Kab. Abu-Naila brought Kab's head to Muhammad as proof. This religion is anything but a religion of peace. When we see ISIS and the Taliban beheading their opposition, where

do you think they get the inspiration from? The Islam of ISIS and the Taliban is indeed the Islam of Muhammad. The seemingly moderate Islam we see in modern countries like Turkey and Pakistan is a product of the twenty-first century ⁸.

Upon the orders of Muhammad, Amir bin Umayya was in hot pursuit of Abu Sufyan to kill him. When he failed and became the hunted, he took refuge in a cave where he met a one-eyed Bedouin shepherd. Umayya introduced himself to the Bedouin, to which he responded, singing, 'I won't be a Muslim as long as I live/And will not believe in the faith of the Muslims.' The poor man didn't realise how violent these early Muslims could be. Umayya waited for the Bedouin to fall asleep, and when he did, Umayya said, 'I went to him and killed him in the most dreadful way that anybody has ever been killed. I leaned over him, stuck the end of my bow into his good eye, and thrust it down until it came out of the back of his neck ⁹.' When Umayya came back and told the story to Muhammad, instead of telling Umayya his own narrated verse of 'There is no compulsion in religion', Muhammad said, 'Well done ⁹.'

It is easy to see why modern Muslims fall for Islam being the religion of peace and Muhammad being the most perfect of human beings; it is simply ignorance. When researching this chapter, I asked my family members and some close friends whether they knew who Al-Nadr or Asma bint Marwan were or if they had heard the story of the one-eyed Bedouin. None of them knew anything about them, but they all knew about the story of a woman who used to throw rubbish at Muhammad. Muslims are systematically fed lies, and by the time they become capable of finding out the answers themselves, they simply lose interest.

Womanising

Throughout human history, men have wanted three things above everything: power, women, and legacy. We have already seen what violence Muhammad was capable of to gain power; now let's see Muhammad's other conquest: women. If Muhammad was any other character in history, i.e. a king or a

scholar, we probably would not have dwelled too much on his sex life, but Muhammad is meant to be a role model for all humanity, so it is important to look into not only his public but also his private life. Muhammad had not only wives but concubines as well, so I will then refer to all of them as women in Muhammad's life.

First Woman

Let's look at Muhammad's life when it comes to women. Before the claim of prophethood, Muhammad married a rich and independent Quraishi woman named Khadijah. Khadijah was a successful merchant who, at the age of 40, asked Muhammad to marry her when he was only 25 at the time. They were married in 594 AD. Looking at the success and life of Khadijah gives us a good picture of what kind of woman she was despite the information about her coming from Islamic sources. Khadijah was obviously strong, rich, older, and most probably dominant in their relationship.

Muhammad remained married to her until her death some 25 years later in 619 AD. Muhammad was fifty at that time. I often used to wonder why Muhammad, who married so many times after Khadijah's death, did not marry anyone or have an affair (or at least what we don't know of) while Khadijah was alive. She probably would have divorced Muhammad had he tried to have an affair or second marriage.

For as much as we know, Muhammad remained loyal to Khadijah and expressed his love for her long after her death, so much so that he once said to Aisha,

I heard the Prophet saying, 'Mary, the daughter of Imran, was the best among the women [of the world of her time], and Khadijah is the best amongst the women [of this nation].' (Bukhari, volume 4, book 55, no. 642)

Khadijah was the first individual to convert to Islam. It is possible Muhammad did love her, so he didn't feel the need to marry more women, which begs another question: did he not love the rest of his wives whom he

kept marrying until he died? The second possibility is that he couldn't risk offending Khadijah and probably didn't have any means or influence to marry other women. This obviously was overcome when Khadijah died, and he suddenly found himself a very influential religious figure. Neither of these possibilities are good for the apostle of Allah as it shows he fulfils his desires once an opportunity presents itself.

Second Woman

There is not a lot written about Sawda bint Zam'a; however, according to Al-Tabari, she was the second wife of Muhammad. Some historians disagree on the order of Muhammad's marriages as some believe Aisha was Muhammad's second wife. Either way, all historians agree that Muhammad consummated his marriage with Sawda before Aisha as she was too young for the marriage to be consummated^{[10](#)}. Sawda was a tall dark-skinned widow whom Muhammad asked to marry. Sawda agreed, and they married in April or May 620 AD. It is unclear why Muhammad actually married Sawda as she was neither young nor beautiful according to the Bukhari^{[11](#)}. Muhammad was probably impressed by the hardship she went through in accepting Islam and wanted to 'reward' her. In any case, there is obviously nothing wrong in marrying another woman once you are widowed. The sad part is that later on, Muhammad lost interest in Sawda, and she was ignored in favour of Aisha^{[12](#)}.

Third Woman

After Khadijah's death, it seems Muhammad's mission was to marry as many women as possible. After marrying Sawda in 620 AD, he married Aisha bint Abu Bakr around the same time in 620 AD (Aisha was 6 at that time); however, the marriage wasn't consummated until 623 AD, until Aisha turned 9. Aisha was the daughter of Muhammad's closest friend Abu Bakr, whom he often called his brother. Some scholars are actually so embarrassed by this fact that they deny that Aisha was 9 at the time Muhammad slept with her. There are plenty of respectable hadiths that Muslims accept, such as the following:

Khadija died three years before the Prophet departed to Medina. He stayed there for two years or so, and then he married Aisha when she was a girl of 6 years of age, and he consumed that marriage when she was 9 years old [13](#).

[Narrated by Aisha] The Prophet married her when she was 6 years old, and he consummated his marriage when she was 9 years old, and then she remained with him for nine years [i.e. till his death] [14](#).

[Narrated by Aisha] I used to play with dolls in the presence of the Prophet, and my girl friends also used to play with me. When Allah's apostle used to enter [my dwelling place], they used to hide themselves, but the Prophet would call them to join and play with me. [Playing with dolls and similar images is forbidden, but it was allowed for Aisha at that time as she was a little girl, not yet reached the age of puberty [15](#).]

How this consummation came to be is described more in detail in Al-Tabari.

My mother came to me while I was being swung on a swing between two branches and got me down. Jumaymah, my nurse, took over and wiped my face with some water and started leading me. When I was at the door, she stopped so I could catch my breath. I was then brought [in] while the Messenger of God was sitting on a bed in our house. [My mother] made me sit on his lap and said, 'These are your relatives. May God bless them with you and bless you with them!' Then the men and women got up and left. The messenger of God consummated his marriage with me in my house while I was 9 years old [16](#).

I cannot imagine being that girl, can anyone imagine letting a 53-year-old man come to their house and have sex with their 9-year-old daughter? Some Muslims dispute these hadiths and many other like this from respectable sources such as Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Abu Dawud, Al Nasa'i, etc. However, when it comes to other non-controversial topics, they are perfectly

fine with these sources. I believe it is extremely hypocritical of those Muslims and Muslim scholars; there should be no doubt in anyone's mind that Aisha was 6 years old when Muhammad married her and 9 years old when he slept with her. In today's world, this would be seen as nothing less than a disgusting, prison-worthy offence. Aisha remained married to Muhammad until his death, when she was 18.

Fourth Woman

Two years after his marriage with Aisha, Muhammad went on to marry the daughter of his second-best friend Umar, Hafsa bint Umar, in January or February 625 AD. Hafsa is credited for memorising the Quran, which was later put into a book when Uthman became the caliph ¹⁷. Hafsa died in November 665 AD ¹⁸.

Fifth Woman

Muhammad's fifth wife was Zaynab bint Khuzayma, also known as mother of the poor. Muhammad married her in February 625 AD after her husband died in the battle of Badr in 624 AD. Not much is known about Zaynab as she died shortly after her marriage to Muhammad. She once gave the last of her flour to a beggar and went without food herself that night, hence earning the name of the 'mother of the poor' ¹⁹. Muhammad was impressed by her generosity and, shortly after, married her. Zaynab died in either 625 AD or 627 AD.

Sixth Woman

After marrying Zaynab, Muhammad married Hind bint Abi Umayya in April 626 AD. Despite the death of Zaynab, Muhammad showed no signs of slowing down. Hind was a beautiful widow with four young children. Her husband died in the battle of Uhud in March 625 AD. After the death of her husband, both Umar and Abu Bakr proposed to her, but she declined, indicating she was a well-respected and desired woman. When Muhammad proposed to her, she hesitated and said she may get jealous of him having other wives ²⁰. Muhammad succeeded in convincing her to marry him, and

they married in 626 AD. In Shia belief, Hind is regarded as the most important wife of Muhammad after Khadijah ²¹. The actual date of Hind's death is disputed; however, the closest we can estimate is she died around 686 AD at the age of 85. She was one of the last surviving wives of Muhammad.

Seventh Woman

The seventh woman in Muhammad's life is Ghazia bint Jabir. Ghazia was a widow and had a son called Sharik. She proposed to Muhammad, and he accepted in early 626 AD; however, when he saw her, he thought her old and divorced her immediately. Ghazia never remarried ²².

Eighth Woman

This is the most controversial of Muhammad's marriages to this point. Zaynab bint Jahsh was married to Muhammad's adopted son, Zayd bint Haritah. Let's look at this instance recorded by Al-Tabari:

One day the Messenger of God went out looking for Zayd. Now there was a covering of haircloth over the doorway, but the wind had lifted the covering so that the doorway was uncovered. Zaynab was in her chamber, undressed, and admiration for her entered the heart of the Prophet. After that happened, she was made unattractive to the other man. ²³

After seeing Zaynab semi-naked, Muhammad was heard by Zaynab whispering to himself,

Glory to Allah who causes hearts to turn ²⁴.

This clearly indicates that Muhammad found Zaynab extremely attractive after seeing her semi-naked in the absence of her husband. As a good son, Zayd confronted Muhammad and said if he liked her, he would divorce her. Muhammad told him, 'Keep your wife ²⁵.'

Obviously, Muhammad was simply saying he liked his wife – 'but don't

worry about giving her to me’. Like most other instances, a verse conveniently came.

So when Zayd had no longer any need for her, We married her to you in order that there not be upon the believers any discomfort concerning the wives of their adopted sons when they no longer have need of them. And God’s command must be fulfilled. (Quran 33:37 [26](#))

It’s remarkable how women are constantly treated as objects. This verse is saying that if the adopted son has no ‘need’ for his wives, he can pass them onto his adopted father. It’s like saying, ‘I no longer need this shoe. Here, you can have it!’

On a similar verse like this (Quran 33:51) where Allah tells Muhammad he can sleep with whomever he pleases, Aisha once remarked:

I feel that your Lord hastens in fulfilling your wishes and desires. [27](#)

Once the divine permission came to serve Muhammad’s lust, Muhammad married Zaynab in March 626 AD.

So below is the critical analysis of the entire episode:

1. Muhammad sees his daughter-in-law and finds her attractive.
2. He knows people will not accept it, so he makes up a verse to make it legal to marry his daughter-in-law, undermining the whole institution of adoption which had helped humanity for thousands of years.

This whole episode is embarrassing for Muslims. Most Muslims don’t know this story, but the scholars who do make different excuses. One of the most common excuses is that Muhammad had to make the point that adopted sons are not like real sons, so their wives are not your daughters-in-law. If you want to make that point, just make the point; why reward yourself and have sex with them? Why could Muhammad just not say, ‘Your adopted sons are not your real sons’?

Ninth Woman

After Muhammad's marriage to Zaynab, things took a turn, and he became more brazen. Perhaps after realising he could get away with anything by making up a verse, he went at it with almost no opposition. Just two months after marrying Zaynab, he brought another woman in his life, Rayhana bint Zayd Ibn Amr. Rayhana's story is very sad. Muhammad massacred her entire tribe, Banu Qurayza, and after conquering them, he beheaded some six hundred to nine hundred men from the ages of 14 and above. The criterion for beheading was any male who had pubic hair as they were considered men and therefore beheaded. Regardless of the reason for attacking Qurayza, we will focus on Muhammad's cruelty and his support of sex slavery. Here is what happened.

1. Muhammad conquers a tribe.
2. Muhammad takes women as sex slaves for himself and his friends.

So far, very ISIS like. After beheading Rayhana's husband, Muhammad the merciful asked her to marry him, which she refused out of respect for her murdered husband. Instead, Muhammad kept her as a slave. Rayhana was young and beautiful, and Muhammad did not relent in his quest to marry his victim. Rayhana eventually gave up life as a slave as it was definitely harder than being one of Muhammad's wives ²⁸. It is not clear if they ever married; however, it is clear that after the conquest of Qurayza, Muhammad kept Rayhana as his slave. Since Allah made sex with slave girls legal, it is safe to assume Muhammad kept her as a sex slave as per this verse:

And [also prohibited to you are all] married women except those your *right hand possesses*. [This is] the decree of Allah upon you. And lawful to you are [all others] beyond these, [provided] that you seek them [in marriage] with [gifts from] your property, desiring chastity, not unlawful sexual intercourse. (Quran 4:24)

In light of the above verse, consider the below hadith:

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (Allah be pleased with him) reported, 'We took

women captives, and we wanted to do ‘*azl* [pulling out of the penis before semen can be ejaculated inside a vagina] with them. We then asked Allah’s Messenger (Peace be upon him) about it, and he said to us, “Verily you do it, verily you do it, verily you do it, but the soul which has to be born until the Day of judgement must be born [29](#).”’

It is clear from this hadith that sex with slaves was no issue in the eyes of this merciful prophet. Not only does it show it’s okay to have sex with your slaves, but also, Muhammad seems to have no problem with bastard children.

It has been narrated on the authority of Salama [b. al-Akwa’] who said, ‘We fought against the Fazara, and Abu Bakr was the commander over us. He had been appointed by the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him). When we were only at an hour’s distance from the water of the enemy, Abu Bakr ordered us to attack. We made a halt during the last part of the night to rest, and then we attacked from all sides and reached their watering place, where a battle was fought. Some of the enemies were killed, and some were taken prisoners. I saw a group of persons that consisted of women and children. I was afraid lest they should reach the mountain before me, so I shot an arrow between them and the mountain. When they saw the arrow, they stopped. So I brought them, driving them along. Among them was a woman from Banu Fazara. She was wearing a leather coat. With her was her daughter, who was one of the prettiest girls in Arabia. I drove them along until I brought them to Abu Bakr, who bestowed that girl upon me as a prize. So we arrived in Medina. I had not yet disrobed her when the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) met me in the street and said, “Give me that girl, O Salama.” I said, “Messenger of Allah, she has fascinated me. I had not yet disrobed her.” When on the next day, the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) again met me in the street, he said, “O Salama, give me that girl. May God bless your father.” I said, “She is for you. Messenger of Allah! By Allah, I have

not yet disrobed her.” The Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) sent her to the people of Mecca and surrendered her as ransom for a number of Muslims who had been kept as prisoners at Mecca ³⁰.

There is no other mention of this young girl anywhere. It shows you how slave girls were treated in Islam, and by the merciful Muhammad, that you could give and take women as if they were a commodity.

Tenth Woman

The tenth woman in Muhammad’s life was Juwayriyya bint al-Harith. Juwayriyya was also a war captive and only 20 years old when Muhammad conquered her tribe, Banu Mastaliq. Two hundred families were taken as captives, as well as two hundred camels, five thousand sheep and goats, and a huge quantity of household goods which were captured as booty. The household goods were sold in an auction to the highest bidder ³¹. As always, Muhammad asked the captives to accept Islam ³¹ or become his slaves. Juwayriyya, whom Muhammad took special interest in, agreed to marry Muhammad in exchange for releasing one hundred prisoners; Muhammad agreed, and they married in 628 AD ³².

Eleventh Woman

This was a major conquest for Muhammad as Ramlah bint Abu Sufyan was the daughter of Muhammad’s fierce adversary Abu Sufyan. She was impressed by Muhammad and wanted to marry him. They married in July 628 AD. Marrying the daughter of his adversary was a great move politically. She remained loyal to Muhammad until his death. Ramlah died in 664 AD.

Twelfth Woman

Safiyah bint Huyayy was the twelfth woman in Muhammad’s life, and her story is another sad one. Safiyah was from the last Jewish tribe in Arabia and the daughter of the chief Huyayy ibn Aktab. After Muhammad defeated her tribe at Khaybar in 628 AD, Muhammad ordered the torture of her husband, Kinanah, to extract information about the treasure of Banu Al-Nadr. Once he

was no longer useful, Muhammad gave him to Muhamamd b. Maslama, who struck Kinanah's head in revenge for his brother^{[33](#)}. Not only did Muhammad kill her husband, but he had also killed her father and brother^{[34](#)}. I am not questioning whether Muhammad was right or wrong in killing Kinanah as I am sure Kinanah would have done the same to Muhammad; what is important is to understand the plight of Safiyah. Even Muhammad's guards knew this was outrageous and this woman might try to harm Muhammad.

While the prophet was lying with Safiyah, Abu Ayyub stayed the night at his door. When he saw the prophet in the morning, he said, 'God is the Greatest.' He had a sword with him. He said to the prophet, 'O Messenger of God, this young woman had just been married, and you killed her father, husband, and brother, so I did not trust her [not to harm you].' The prophet laughed and said, 'Good^{[34](#)}.'

It is almost inconceivable today that a woman could marry a man who has killed her entire family and taken over her city, but either way, Muhammad married her in July 628 AD, possibly forcibly. This is happening in ISIS-controlled territories: kill the fathers and husbands in the morning, marry or enslave the conquered women in the evening – and Muslims say ISIS is not Islam!

Thirteenth Woman

The thirteenth woman in Muhammad's life was Maymunah bint al-Harith al-Hilaliyah, and while Muhammad was not slowing down his conquest of women, there is not much controversy about this marriage. They married in 629 AD, and Maymunah died in 680 or 681 AD^{[35](#)}.

Fourteenth Woman

Maria bint Shamoon, a.k.a. Maria Al-Qibtia, was a Coptic slave of the Muqawqis, the Christian ruler of Egypt, who gifted her to Muhammad in 628 AD along with her sister Siren and one thousand pieces of gold^{[36](#)}. Muhammad kept her as a concubine for some years despite protests from his

wives. She was at least the second sex slave of Muhammad after Rayhana (the ninth woman). Muhammad admired the fair-skinned and beautiful Maria and ordered her to veil herself, but he did have intercourse with her as she was his property. It is unclear why Muhammad did not marry her straight away or if ever for that matter³⁷. Those who argue that Muhammad probably married Maria in later years cannot explain why, unlike other wives of Muhammad, Maria wasn't given the status of *umm* (mother) of believers; instead, she was referred only as Umm Ibrahim. This indicates that Muhammad didn't marry her and treated her as his sex slave. Maria died five years after Muhammad's death in 637 AD.

Other sources, however, show a different, scandalous affair with Maria. According to Tafsir Al-Jalalain, Muhammad went to see Hafsa, but then he saw her slave Maria Al-Qibtia. Muhammad took a liking to her beauty and told Hafsa that her father Omar had called for her. When Hafsa went to see her father, she realised she was not called for, so she hurried back to her house, only to find Muhammad in bed with Maria. Hafsa became hysterical and upset with Muhammad, who instructed her to keep quiet. Unfortunately for Muhammad, Hafsa told Aisha, and this angered Muhammad so much that he said he wouldn't visit his wives for a month. Like always, Allah came to the rescue and conveniently gave Muhammad this verse:

O Prophet, why do you prohibit [yourself from] what Allah has made lawful for you, seeking the approval of your wives? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. (Quran 66:1)

Some Muslim scholars claim that this verse was not about Maria, but instead, it was about Muhammad's habit of consuming a honey that made his breath smell. This excuse seems highly unlikely as bad breath is far too trivial a matter for Allah's intervention. Moreover, you wouldn't use the word *lawful* for honey. Muhammad used this verse to justify his sleeping with Maria. To keep both Hafsa and Aisha in check, the next verse threatened them even more:

If you two [wives] repent to Allah, [it is best] for your hearts have

deviated. But if you cooperate against him, then indeed, Allah is his protector, and Gabriel and the righteous of the believers and the angels, moreover, are [his] assistants. (Quran 66:3)

One can see how quickly Allah gets involved in the sex life of Muhammad. Surely, there were people dying and suffering in Africa, Australia, and North and South America, yet the creator of billions of galaxies is interested in explaining the sexual behaviour of Muhammad to his wives.

There are more sources that verify Maria being Muhammad's concubine than those that claim she was his wife, but either way, this conduct is not appropriate even by today's morally promiscuous standards. The next three marriages are in the period from 627 to 629 AD as the dates are not clear.

Fifteenth Woman

The fifteenth woman in Muhammad's life was Khawla bint Hudha, and they married in 627 or 629 AD; however, Khawla died before the marriage could be consummated ³⁸.

Sixteenth Woman

The sixteenth woman in Muhammad's life was Sharaf bint Khalifa; she also died before the marriage could be consummated ³⁹.

Seventeenth Woman

The next woman was Sana al-Nashat bint Rifaa (Asma), who also died before the marriage could be consummated ⁴⁰.

Eighteenth Woman

Not much is known about Bint Jundub ibn Damra of Janda'a other than the fact that Muhammad married her but divorced her soon after. We don't know if the marriage was consummated ⁴¹.

Nineteenth Woman

The next woman in Muhammad's life was Mulayka bint Kaab. They married in 630 AD. She remained married until her death ⁴².

Twentieth Woman

Muhammad married Fatima Al-Aliya in March 630 AD. Muhammad's wives told him that she peeped at men in the mosque. Muhammad didn't believe them at first, but when the wives showed him, Muhammad immediately divorced her ⁴³.

Twenty-first Woman

The next woman in Muhammad's life was Asma bint Al-Numan, and they married in June or July 630 AD. Muhammad divorced her after a woman tricked Asma into saying, 'I seek God's protection from you ⁴⁴.'

Twenty-second Woman

The twenty-second woman is Amra bint Yazid, and Muhammad married her in 631 AD but divorced her without consummating the marriage, knowing she showed the symptoms of leprosy ⁴⁵. Strange how Muhammad didn't use his special hotline to Allah to heal her ⁴⁵.

Twenty-third Woman

The next woman to marry Muhammad was Al-Shanba' bint Amr in 632 AD. Muhammad's son Ibrahim died when she entered her house, to which she remarked, 'If he were a prophet, the person who is dearest to him would not have died.' Muhammad divorced her for this comment ⁴⁶. If you think about it, it was a pretty fair comment ⁴⁶.

Twenty-fourth Woman

Muhammad married Qutayla (Habla) bint Qays in May 632 AD, but Muhammad died before she arrived in Medina. She became an apostate immediately on hearing the news and married an Arab chief ⁴⁷.

There are at least two other concubines that Muhammad is reported to have

had, but because of a lack of credible evidence, I won't discuss them.

We can see a gradual trend of Muhammad's increasing womanising as he became more and more influential. When he was an ordinary man, he only managed to get one wife, but towards the end of his life, as the number of his followers grew, so did the number of his wives. This clearly shows Muhammad had personal ambitions behind claiming to be a prophet. After 626 AD, he managed to get seventeen more wives until his death in 632 AD, an average of 2.83 new women every year. This puts Hugh Hefner to shame.

Tyrannical

Muhammad behaved like a warlord and a king; anyone who no longer believed in him had to die. Although there is no direct verse in the Quran that dictates death for apostasy, there are various hadiths that show Muhammad wants anyone leaving Islam be put to death.

Some *zanadiqa* [atheists] were brought to 'Ali, and he burnt them. The news of this event reached Ibn 'Abbas, who said, 'If I had been in his place, I would not have burnt them as Allah's Apostle forbade it, saying, "Do not punish anybody with Allah's punishment [fire]." I would have killed them according to the statement of Allah's Apostle, 'whoever changed his Islamic religion, then kill him ⁴⁸.'

We do not have any record of Muhammad putting anyone to death for the crime of apostasy; however, his quote has been used by present-day Muslim leaders to justify the killings of apostates.

Cult Leader

All religions are basically cults; only the number of subscribers to the ideology determines its status as cult or religion. Muhammad behaved like a cult leader; as demonstrated above, he demanded 100 per cent loyalty, enjoyed the company of many women, and sought power. Not only were these three features the highlights of Muhammad's life, but Muhammad also enjoyed extreme flattery as evident from the hadith below:

The Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) had a wooden bowl in which He used to urinate which was placed under his bed. One night he searched for it but did not find it and asked for it, saying, ‘Where is the bowl?’ The members of the house replied, ‘Barrah, the slave girl of Umm Salamah, drank it.’

The Prophet [S] replied, ‘Surely, she has protected herself from the fire with a great wall! [85](#)’

It is true; in this instance, Muhammad had no control over the actions of the slave girl, but what he did have a control over was his response. He made people believe his urine was so potent that drinking it would cure future stomach pains forever. We have seen this is exactly how most cult leaders behave; they create a cult of personality where everything about them is special. Some Muslim scholars do not agree with the authenticity of this hadith, so I will leave it to the readers to accept it as fact or fiction. But don’t make up your minds yet as there are some more hadiths that show a similar behavioural pattern:

The Messenger of Allah used to pray salah at his house and made it long. Once, He urinated in the well, which was situated inside the house. Anas said, ‘There was no well in Madinah which tasted more cool and sweet than it.’ He said, ‘When the sahabah come to my house, I serve them with the sweet water of that well.’ In the era of jahiliyyah, it was known as al-Barud, ‘the cool well’ [86](#).

I wonder what made him urinate in the well. It is a bizarre male phenomenon that sometimes we have access to a toilet but choose to urinate against a wall instead, especially when no one is watching. Maybe Muhammad had a similar feeling that compelled him to urinate in a well; either way, Muhammad’s followers are saying (either through delusion or to flatter Muhammad) that since Muhammad urinated in the well, the water had become cooler and sweeter.

Some Muslims claim that Muhammad was unaware of people drinking his

urine; in that case, couldn't Allah send a revelation to Muhammad? After all, he sent revelations over far more trivial matters.

Whether Muhammad knew about the magical powers of his urine or not, he definitely knew about the 'special powers' of his saliva. Consider the following hadiths from Bukhari which are accepted to be correct:

By Allah, if he spat, the spittle would fall in the hand of one of them [i.e. the Prophet's companions], who would rub it on his face and skin [87](#).

Then the Prophet asked for a drinking bowl containing water and washed his hands and face in it and then took a mouthful of water and threw it therein, saying [to us], 'Drink [some of] it and pour [some] over your faces and chests and be happy at the good tidings [88](#).'

The Prophet came to [the grave of] 'Abdullah bin Ubai after his body was buried. The body was brought out, and then the Prophet put his saliva over the body and clothed it in his shirt [89](#).

After he had performed ablution [the special washing method before praying], the remaining water was taken by the people, and they started smearing their bodies with it [as a blessed thing] [90](#).

In all these hadiths, it is clear Muhammad was creating a cult of personality. He claimed to be a unique human being whose urine and saliva had special secret powers, which was obviously untestable.

Death of Muhammad

After the victory of Khaibar in 629 AD, a Jewish woman, Zaynab bint Al-Harith, served him a poisoned sheep. Bishr b. Al-Bars was with Muhammad at the time; however, he swallowed it while Muhammad spat it out and said, 'This bone informs me that its poisoned.' You have to admire his wit in coming up with really interesting quotes.

What made Muhammad not swallow is not clear as obviously, as far as we know, bones don't speak. Maybe he noticed the difference in the taste, or he probably doubted Zaynab. Regardless, Muhammad called for Zaynab, and she confessed. When Muhammad asked, 'What led you to do this?' she said, 'How you have afflicted my people is not hidden from you. So I said, "If he is a prophet, he will be informed, but if he is a king, I shall be rid of him."' "

Three years later, on 8 June 632 AD, Muhammad died. The cause of Muhammad's death is not known. It is unlikely that the poison caused Muhammad's death as it is quite strange for poison to take three years to take effect; however, some historians say the poison had weakened his immune system, causing his eventual death. Muhammad was 62 years old.

I am willing to grant Muslims that Muhammad was a product of his time, and any warlord of that time would have done similar things: 'Follow me or lose your neck!' However, if today there was a man who claimed divine revelation and was spreading his message, you would likely call him crazy or an outright liar. Moreover, if you heard he was conquering neighbouring towns and cities and beheading people, you would call him a tyrant warlord. If you heard he was first killing the men and then marrying their women, you would call him a psychopathic rapist. No person in their right mind would call this man good, not by any stretch of the imagination. A lot of Muslims call ISIS barbaric and evil; however, they are doing exactly what Muhammad did, taking slaves and sex slaves, chopping off people's hands, and stoning adulterers. Muhammad would have killed and beheaded a lot more had he been alive at the time of the first four caliphs, when Islamic conquest grew significantly larger than in his time. Muhammad was no way near 'good' by today's standards, let alone the 'perfect' human that Muslims claim.

CHAPTER 6

Morality

Do you really mean the only reason you try to be good is to gain God's approval and reward? That's not morality. That's just sucking up.

— Richard Dawkins

One of the favourite questions of religion's defenders goes something like this: if you remove God, then where would you get your morals from?

The answer is very simple: your morals don't come from any god; they come from the human mind and evolve over time. We even have a term for it; it's called the 'moral zeitgeist' or, as Prof Richard Dawkins calls it, the 'shifting moral zeitgeist'. *Zeitgeist* was a term first coined by a German philosopher, Georg Hegel. According to the Oxford Dictionary, zeitgeist is 'a defining spirit or mood of history as shown by the ideas and beliefs of the time'. For example, throughout most of recorded human history, slavery was part of the zeitgeist for most of the civilisations of the world. However, according to Professor Dawkins's shifting moral zeitgeist, we can see how almost everyone collectively discarded slavery in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries despite all the major religions condoning it.

Through popular culture, Americans think that Abraham Lincoln was the first person to raise his voice against slavery, but two years before Abraham Lincoln, Tsar Alexander II signed the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves in Russia in 1861. Even earlier, slavery was completely outlawed in the wake of the French Revolution; however, it was reinstated by Napoleon in 1802. In the late eighteenth century, various Western countries were actively taking steps to remove or at least reduce slavery simultaneously. It is possible that modern thinkers like Abraham Lincoln somehow influenced Tsar Alexander II, but regardless, it is evident the moral

zeitgeist was shifting simultaneously in two different parts of the world. 19th century Russia was a backward society at the time, and tsars of Russia maintained a strong hold over the peasants to keep their economy working, but despite all this, Alexander II realised that it was time for the moral zeitgeist to shift. It is rather unfortunate that Alexander II was assassinated and his successor abolished the freeing of serfs, resulting in a society that rejected the forward motion of the shifting moral zeitgeist. One can only wonder if the October Revolution of Russia had happened whether Alexander III would have continued the liberalisation policies of his father. The United States of America's moral zeitgeist changed and, a hundred years later, became the greatest power the world had ever seen, while the Russian Romanov dynasty fell with its royal family massacred on 17 July 1918.

One can make a strong case in the favour of the shifting moral zeitgeist that societies that do not adopt it are bound to be isolated in their predefined and un-evolving morals with severe consequences, such as the October Revolution of Russia. It is important for me to state that Alexander II's rejection of the shifting moral zeitgeist was not the only cause for the October Revolution, but it was definitely one of the causes. One of the brightest and most charismatic intellectuals of Pakistan, Hassan Nisar, argued numerous times with religion-defending traditionalists about why they don't travel in donkey carts instead of travelling in cars or fight with swords instead of craving modern weaponry since they love to do what their forefathers did. The clichéd response he gets is you can evolve technology, but you should not allow your morals to evolve. These deniers of the shifting moral zeitgeist have only one thing that compels them to deny equal rights to women, recognise the dignity of homosexuals, and even reject democracy: it is none other than religion.

One can only see the cherry-picking of these traditionalists, where they pick and choose what suits their best interests at any given time. They even modify their religions to suit their needs as I mentioned earlier. How can they say that everything but morals can evolve? I strongly doubt that these respected traditionalists would say that it is okay to rape your wife, as quoted

in one of the hadiths:

By him in Whose Hand lies my life, a woman cannot carry out the right of her Lord till she carries out the right of her husband. And if he asks her to surrender herself [to him for sexual intercourse], she should not refuse him, even if she is on a camel's saddle. (Ibn Majah, 1854)

Although some Muslim clerics (Samir Abu Hamza ⁸⁵) have issued fatwas and given a decree to Muslim men to rape their wives if they want, I do not wish to implicate the majority of Muslims with the likes of these clerics. Most Muslims are actually good, moderate human beings, which makes them hypocritical, bad Muslims. I doubt people like Imran Khan and other moderate Muslims would agree with the clerics mentioned above. They simply ignore these teachings of their religions and actually embrace the moral zeitgeist themselves but are either too ignorant or too scared to admit it.

It would not be unfair to claim that change is the greatest tradition of humanity. So much has changed since it was first thought of, such as letters to emails, horses to supercars, ravens to airmail, etc.; if everything can change, then why not morality? People who oppose shifting moral zeitgeists are not necessarily opposed to them; as argued above, some of the greatest traditionalists have actually adopted the shifting moral zeitgeist and do not draw their morals from scripture. Despite all this, why do we still have moral dilemmas in the twenty-first century? In the middle of the twentieth century, feminism was the biggest moral dilemma. Until very recently (on the scale of human civilisation), women were still not respected or given the place that they enjoy today. New Zealand was the first country to allow women to vote in 1896 and thus started shifting the moral zeitgeist, but it must be noted the movement for equal rights for women started simultaneously all over the world. In 1955, the civil rights movement began shifting the moral zeitgeist towards equal rights for African Americans. Could Barack Obama have become the forty-fourth president of the United States had this movement

been delayed by a decade? The moral zeitgeist shifts; why and how it shifts, we do not know, but it does shift, and all the advancement in human morality is testament to it.

We are in the midst of another wave of the shifting moral zeitgeist; it is the LGBT movement for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender social rights. Although homosexuals in the Western world are not denied the right to vote or contest elections, they still face discrimination when it comes to recognising their union with other same-sex individuals. I had to come back and edit this section as when I had written it originally, Australia was still amongst the countries that did not recognise same-sex marriages. Thanks to the same-sex referendum, same-sex marriage is now 'legal' in Australia as of 9 December 2017. When people in a hundred years' time look back at this change of law, they will think the same things we think today about women being allowed to vote for the first time in New Zealand in 1896, like 'What was wrong with the people at that time? How could a woman not be allowed to vote?' Of course, there were people in 1896 who opposed giving women this right, just like we have people who oppose recognising same-sex marriage, but like those misogynists have now largely disappeared, these homophobes will disappear as well. This is a perfect example of the shifting moral zeitgeist. Now this is what's happening in the modern Western and some lucky Eastern civilisations, but unfortunately, the East is still dominated by religion, mainly Islam, with the exception of China, India, and the Far East, so there is widespread discrimination against homosexuals. If anything, religion actually stands in the way of higher morality.

Let's just take the case of homosexuality. The countries with the least religious influence are adopting the changing moral zeitgeist more openly than the countries dominated by morals from thousands of years ago. However, these religious countries, with the notable exception of Saudi Arabia and Iran, do not use morals from thousands of years ago, and even Saudi Arabia doesn't allow slavery (at least on paper; it was the last country to abolish slavery in 1962), yet all guns are out when it comes to recognising the rights of gays and lesbians just because it is not supported by their

scriptures. If Muslim countries can ignore the Quran about slavery, why can't they do the same when recognising homosexuals?

There is no such thing as absolute morality. Morality is meant to be ever-changing; we have come a long way from the Bronze and Dark Ages. It is not wild to imagine that the common morality of the people of the twenty-third century will be very different from our own. We only got rid of the human suffering from slavery a century ago, we recently acknowledged that women are *not* inferior to men, and we are starting to acknowledge homosexuals with equal rights. We are only starting to remove unnecessary human suffering. Our morality is constantly evolving, and so it should; the moment we stop, we will stagnate, and that will be the beginning of the end of our progress.

Some modern theists tap-dance around this question of morality and are constantly changing the premise. I was watching Frank Turek, a Christian theist, debating the question of morality with an atheist in one of his lectures. When the atheist said that we are naturally altruistic, Turek kept going back to him and kept asking, 'But where does this altruism come from?' He was literally asking the atheist which molecule in our body tells us that we should not kill or look after others. I don't know why the atheist didn't answer that, instead admitting that Turek's argument that it comes from God was stronger [56](#). Turek also asked the young atheist, 'Who says "being good to one another" is a good thing?'

The answer is very simple: the idea of what is good and what is bad comes from our own thought processes. As a species, we have established it is not okay to murder or rape anyone (unlike the Bible and Quran, which actually advocate murder and rape under certain conditions). Neanderthals cared for their sick and elderly [57](#). Did they get their own Jesus as well? Neanderthals only separated from humans six hundred thousand years ago, but we've witnessed altruism in far earlier hominids like *Homo erectus*. Palaeontologists discovered a 1.7-million-year-old elderly *Homo erectus* skull which was toothless but for a single canine. The tooth sockets had completely reabsorbed into the skull, something which could only have

happened if he had stayed alive after losing his teeth, which would have taken several years [58](#). So despite the disadvantage of lacking teeth, this hominid clearly survived for quite a while. Does this mean that they were cared for by their group? We know that *Homo erectus* walked upright, ate meat, and used basic stone tools. It would have been totally impossible for this old sick *Homo erectus* to survive after losing their teeth, but we know they did, indicating they were looked after, proving altruism. Even chimpanzees show humanlike altruism where they look after their fellow chimpanzees [59](#).

The point I am trying to make is we are not good or altruistic because of Moses, Jesus, or Muhammad (even if you take the definition of good from these so-called prophets). We are good to one another as the survival of our species depends on it. Every species has one primary purpose: to survive. By looking after one another and by not murdering and raping, we increase the probability of this survival.

I must commend an actress who drew worldwide attention in early 2012 for her allegedly ‘provocative’ photo shoot, Veena Malik. Veena was born in Pakistan and, after working in some Pakistani movies, moved to India to work in Bollywood. She appeared in a few movies and then went on *Celebrity Big Brother*. She was condemned all over Pakistani media by radicals as well as so-called moderates for mingling with a Hindu man. Veena initially tried to dismiss the rumours of any kind of relationship with this Hindu man but eventually started raising her voice for her freedom. She argued she should be allowed to choose whatever she likes in her life. Today she is portrayed, at least by the media, as one of the most distasteful Pakistani celebrities, but people who bring a change are often described as distasteful. I doubt if the status quo of the time ever found Martin Luther King Jr. or Nelson Mandela tasteful.

It irks me beyond words when I hear these traditionalists support ideas like forbidding women to wear skirts or work in the film industry as ‘Western traditions’. How dare they credit Western civilisation for the actions of a few

brave humans who happened to have been born in the West? The Western civilisation of the Middle Ages did not approve of women mingling with men, wearing mini-skirts, or having a say in politics. Instead of going to a civilisation, the credit actually goes to those brave humans who initiated the shifting of the moral zeitgeist. I do not credit the Western status quo with abolishing slavery and misogyny but see it as the human tradition of evolving morality and struggling to make it acceptable to their respective societies.

Cyrus the Great in the Cyrus Cylinder some 2500 years ago was probably the first man to promote secular values who was a Persian. Just as democracy first happened in the West, it does not give them ownership over it, just like the equal rights for women and other liberties Western citizens enjoy are not Western traditions but human traditions. Disregarding equal rights for women, homosexuals, and those of other cultural minorities on the premise of it being a Western tradition is simply illogical. Instead of dividing the human race further, we should be adopting better morals, no matter where they originate. If an alien race suddenly decides to take over the world, they would say, 'These humans have nuclear weapons!' They wouldn't say, 'Western and some Eastern countries have nuclear weapons.' Whatever race or part of the globe they might be from, they would still refer to them as 'humans' as humans will be the common enemy. If we can become one people just like that in the event of an alien invasion and see that unity is not some far-flung astronomically impossible concept, why can't we unite when it comes to ideas about forming a better civilisation?

Arriving at the conclusion that one should not steal from or murder a fellow human being is not an invention of the scripture. There were probably murders pre-civilisation, but that was not because people were waiting for divine orders to come from the heavens; rather, it was because of the lack of laws and law enforcement. The Mesopotamian king Hammurabi is credited to be the first one to write laws on a tablet in 1754 BC. His laws were in some cases good but in other cases very primitive ⁶⁰. Hammurabi lived before the time of Jesus and certainly before the time of Muhammad. Although we don't have them written on some ancient tablet, it is not hard to assume that the

civilisations before the Mesopotamians also had some sort of laws. Before that, local tribes had some sort of laws. Now let's just assume we have to get our morality from the Abrahamic God; we will be killing homosexuals just because they are born this way, we will be treating women as inferior to men just because that's how some ancient Middle Eastern men saw them, and we might still be owning slaves and sex slaves. Anyone who says we get our morality from the scripture is either ignorant or outright lying.

I was watching a conversation between Sam Harris and Ben Shapiro on YouTube conducted sometime in late 2017 or early 2018. When I first became aware of Shapiro, I found him very intelligent, thoughtful, and rational. I have no doubt he possesses all the qualities I just mentioned, so my conclusion was that he must be an atheist; however, I was flabbergasted to find another religious victim. Ben is an Orthodox Jew just like his parents. Here is another example of a perfectly wise, intelligent, and rational human being giving in to the superstitions and myths of the religion he was born into. Shapiro, who is generally reasoned and finds the best explanation in almost every other subject he talks about, lets go of these traits when it comes to religion and tiptoes around the same vague arguments the theists before him have used. When it comes to the God question, he is vague and pseudo-philosophical and speaks without any comprehensive reasoning. At one particular point in the conversation, Shapiro used the common theist line inspired by Hume 'Science gives you "is", but religion gives you "ought"'.

This is another wild claim with no solid basis behind it. It is true science gives you what 'is', but reason, not religion, gives you how things ought to be. Reason is not only the best way to answer 'ought'; it is, in fact, the only way to answer it. To claim that religion tells us how we ought to behave is a terrible claim to say the least. Whenever you cross-examine theists on this question, they come back with vague statements like 'Religion tells us to be good', 'Religion tells us to be honest', etc., but when you look into it in more detail, the religious definition of 'good' or 'honest' is completely different from ours.

Islam promotes amputation as punishment for thieves. That's where the ball stops rolling – in Islam at least – but there is a reason why most Muslim countries don't practice amputation for thieves. Through reasoning, we have come to the conclusion that any criminal should be given an opportunity to rehabilitate after their punishment. This reason is good enough to stop punitive amputation. Clearly, in this example, modern reasoning has answered the 'ought' question. Theists could argue and claim ownership over the idea of consequences and claim that religion gives you the idea of punishing the individual, but again, it would be another wild claim that people before these religions existed didn't understand the concept of consequences. Certain apes, mainly chimpanzees, have shown understanding of basic consequences. Katrin Riedl from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, found that chimpanzees will punish individuals who steal food from them but not those who steal food from others [28](#).

So even if chimpanzees understand the concept of punishing the bad individuals, it is evidence they are also capable of very basic reasoning. I doubt chimpanzees had any Abraham, Moses, Jesus, or Muhammad. Who knows? Chimpanzees are now probably going through a stage earlier hominids went through millions of years ago. They may also be becoming superstitious and inventing magical deities when faced with unexplained or unknown phenomena. Some smarter ones might already be claiming prophethood and fooling the not-so-smart ones – who knows? As demonstrated above, the religious 'ought' claim is absolutely false and has no reason to be taken seriously. Reason is the basis for our better morality.

The second claim people like Shapiro make is that the Western world is designed on the basis of Judeo-Christian values. Western democracies are built more on Greek and Roman values than Judeo-Christian values, but democracy supports the shifting moral zeitgeist and new thinking, whereas religious 'morality' doesn't. In fact, democracy is the exact opposite of religion. Morals in religions can't evolve over time, but in democracy, morals are always evolving through legislation or through debates on public

platforms. Here, by democracy I don't mean the traditional definition where people go in and elect their leader but some of the most basic principles such as presenting arguments and counter arguments. Change is such a strong phenomenon that despite the fact that religions shouldn't evolve, they end up evolving as well. Modern Christians don't support the idea of stoning a non-virgin woman at her father's doorstep or killing homosexuals, but by Judeo-Christian values, we should still be doing that. Even Muslims have evolved from the Islam of Muhammad. There is growing tolerance towards homosexuals, apostates, and adulterers. After the Danish cartoon saga, some Muslims came out and started to say that although they do not support drawing the Muhammad cartoons, they are against killing the cartoonists. Saudi Arabia, which has long subjugated women and never allowed women to drive, passed a bill in 2017 allowing them to drive and, on 5 March 2018, passed a law enabling single women to travel alone without the guardianship of their male counterparts. These are clear examples of people slowly moving away from the morality of their religion.

When Sam Harris denied having Judeo-Christian values, Shapiro asked him where he was born. Shapiro tried to argue that if you are born in a country with a majority Judeo-Christian population, it automatically means it has Judeo-Christian values. It is true that the founding fathers of the United States didn't see anything wrong with slavery or women not being able to vote; these people were highly enlightened and had the thirst to make a country different from the Europe of the time. Most of the founding fathers were of Christian heritage, but they weren't fundamentalist Christians. Shapiro was of the view that religion should be credited for the fact that you can go from killing a homosexual to giving them marriage equality. This is an absurd claim because by that principle, we should credit the dictatorship in a country that goes from dictatorship to democracy. Even if we accept that the United States has Judeo-Christian roots, the fact that these values have been thrown out of the window is testament to the slow rejection of their heritage. The elimination of traditional Judeo-Christian values in the United States cannot be accredited to religion.

CHAPTER 7

The Quran

*As a source of objective morality, the Bible is one of the worst books we have.
It might be the worst, in fact, if we didn't happen to have the Quran.*

— Sam Harris

Muslims believe the Quran is the literal word of God revealed to Muhammad via the archangel Gabriel. In today's world, just imagine a man coming to you and saying he hears voices in his head and believes it is God communicating with him. No one would take this person seriously, but when you say this person came 1,400 years ago, it suddenly becomes legitimate. The Quran is full of scientific bumbles and is no better than any other text of the seventh century. We only have to find one verse that is either scientifically incorrect or morally corrupt to make our case against the Quran's author. If it was a book written by the all-wise, intelligent being who created billions of galaxies, he would not have written even a single scientifically incorrect verse, let alone tens of them. The Quran, on the other hand, is full of scientifically incorrect and morally corrupt verses.

Let's look at some typical problems with the Quran.

Is the Quran the Word of God?

Muslims love to claim that the Quran is the infallible word of God, the creator of everything. They often quote this verse:

If all mankind and the jinn would come together to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce its like, even though they exerted all and their strength in aiding one another. (17:88)

This means no one can create a book better than Quran, which is another of

Islam's claims. There are plenty of books written that do not support slavery, homophobia, misogyny, the killing of infidels, violence, etc. But just for the sake of method B, let's run with this claim and analyse the Quran and just see for ourselves that it is indeed a masterpiece that could only have been written by a highly intelligent being.

The first question that comes to your mind is 'Why did God send so many prophets in the Middle East at a time when the best way of communicating was only face-to-face preaching or, later, a book?' I can create a video today, and it can reach more people in twenty-four hours than Muhammad would have reached in months back in his day.

Second, why did Allah pick one language over every other – and one that is so easily distorted? Muslims will say, well, all languages get distorted. This is true, but this is a human problem, so why couldn't Allah create a language that wouldn't be distorted? After all, he is capable of doing anything, right?

Whenever there is a terrorist attack, Muslims love to say that these are misguided people who do not understand the peaceful message of Islam. You could ask why God could not write a book simple enough that it would not be mistaken or misunderstood so easily. Consider this verse:

Then fight in the cause of Allah, and know that Allah Heareth and knoweth all things. (2:244)

This verse can be easily taken in two manners:

1. Fight in the way of Allah and spread Allah's message (after all, Muhammad did it).
2. Only fight in the way of Allah to defend your Muslim land.

We can easily guess what type of Muslims will interpret it which way; ISIS will take the first interpretation, but modern, rather less violent Muslims will take the second interpretation.

What about this verse?

Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knoweth, and ye know not. (2:216)

Again, some Muslims will say Allah is telling us to fight in self-defence; some will say Allah is ordering us to attack infidels. You can twist these verses any way you like. Now let's just try this with this not-so-very-intelligent human's verse:

Nothing can travel faster than the speed of light in space. — Albert Einstein

I'm thinking, 'I can't misunderstand this statement!' It is very clear and supported by mathematics. In the one hundred years since Einstein found this, no one has been able to disprove it. If a man like Einstein can come up with a simple statement, why couldn't Allah?

As per the Muslims' belief, this Abrahamic God is so incompetent that he could not protect his own previous books like the Bible and Torah. Did the creator of the universe not learn his lesson after at least two failures? This time, he said, 'I will make a book that no one can change!' but why couldn't this creator of billions of galaxies control some puny Middle Eastern desert dwellers from distorting his book? Why did he need prophets to convey his message? If he wants people to believe in him, why could he not just download himself in the brains of every person? Is this too much to ask from a being who can do anything? It is almost as if he wants humans to fail so this merciful God can burn his creations in hell forever.

Lastly, why was God performing all these miracles in ancient times and not today? I mean, it was great when you were living around Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad because you could see sheep appearing out of nowhere in place of Abraham's son, the splitting of the Red Sea, Jesus walking on water, and Muhammad splitting the moon (although no one saw him riding on the winged horse to heaven), and then he left the record of all these miracles in his ancient books. Good one, God. The generations to come are just expected to blindly believe in it.

What about a verse like this?

And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out. And Al-Fitnah [disbelief or unrest] is worse than killing ... but if they desist, then lo! Allah is forgiving and merciful. And fight them until there is no more fitna. (2:191–193)

I am a man of the twenty-first century, and I can think of many ways to use this verse the way I want to. A literalist can say, well, ‘Harris Sultan is spreading fitna (unrest), and now it is the duty of every believer to kill him.’ This is how jihadis use young Muslim men. ‘India has occupied Kashmir and is spreading fitna. Kill them!’ Or ‘The Jews have captured Jerusalem, so *kill them all*.’ If this is not the true meaning of the verse (as some modern Muslims will say), then it begs the question: couldn’t the god with infinite wisdom find better words to spread his message?

There are hundreds of scholars today who interpret the Quran the way they want to. Let’s pick some common problems in the Quran that have confused the living daylights out of these scholars:

- Earth is flat (Sheikh Abdul Aziz Ibn Abdullah).
- Earth is not flat (Zakir Naik).
- The sun goes around Earth (Sheikh Bandar Al-Khaibari).
- The sun doesn’t go around Earth (Zakir Naik).
- Kill an apostate (Yusuf Al-Qaradawi).
- Don’t kill an apostate (Dr Shabir Ally).
- Evolution is correct (Dr Yasir Qadhi).
- Evolution is not correct (Zakir Naik).

And then there are simply incorrect Quranic verses like this:

Exalted is He who created all pairs – from what the earth grows and from themselves and from that which they do not know. (36:36)

This verse claims that all animals are created in pairs, like male and female. Meet the whiptail lizard, an all-female species. No males needed. They reproduce through parthenogenesis, commonly known as asexual reproduction.

So let's go over the problems with God I've revealed in this chapter so far:

1. God cannot communicate with humans directly, so he sends a prophet.
2. This prophet cannot stay alive forever, so he leaves a book.
3. This book gets misinterpreted so easily that you constantly need mini-prophet-like scholars.
4. Within these scholars, we have different types of scholars to spread the 'real message of God'.

So much confusion over the 'true message of God'. All this could have been avoided if Allah, the one who can do anything, had just sent his information directly to human brains or any method other than sending a book thousands of years ago. Humans have done a better job; we can download software in a machine with almost no chance of corruption.

Let's discuss the Quran in a little more detail.

Scientific Inaccuracies of the Scripture

Unlike Christians, Muslims actually believe in the literal word of the Quran. Modern Christians, when trapped in the scientific inaccuracies of the Bible, turn and say it is only metaphorical. However, Muslims actually believe in every single word of the Quran literally. They believe in Noah's flood, Adam and Eve being the first humans whose children obviously married their own siblings, and the splitting of the moon, as well Jonah surviving three nights inside a whale and many more.

Unlike Christians, who give up and mostly don't claim to mix science with their scripture, Muslims love to claim that 'what science is discovering today, our Allah and prophet told us 1,400 years ago in his book'. Like so many others, this is a wild claim. Muslims love to go to extreme intellectual dishonesty to back up these claims. They twist and turn the meanings of these verses. The Internet is filled with claims of the Quran's scientific knowledge, so it's very important to look at the counterpoint of these claims.

The first question is, why do these Muslims always find these verses *after* science has already discovered them? Obviously, with hindsight, you can twist the vague verses and turn them into anything.

Let's look at some of these verses:

The Big Bang

Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the Earth were meshed together – then We ripped them apart? And then We made of water everything living? Would they still not believe? (21:30)

Muslims claim that this verse is telling us about the Big Bang as Allah is saying everything was 'meshed together, and then he ripped them apart'.

The first inaccuracy is that Earth and the heavens were never meshed together; it was only energy that was concentrated in such a small dot that there wasn't even any matter. Since energy and matter are the same thing and interchangeable (something we know thanks to Einstein and not some religious verse), this energy gave rise to hydrogen atoms under extreme circumstances right after the Big Bang. Heavier elements like iron, nickel, silicon, carbon, etc. had not even been formed yet, so there was no Earth in sight.

The first stars came millions of years after the Big Bang. These stars were the factories for heavier elements like carbon, iron, silicon, oxygen, gold, etc. which were needed to give rise to planets and eventually life. Carl Sagan famously said, 'We are made of stardust.' If these big stars had not died,

Earth and life would not be here. So no, Earth and the heavens were *not* meshed together. The stuff needed to make planets like Earth came in a lot later; the ingredients were just not there at the beginning.

Now look at the second part of the verse: ‘We created every living thing out of water’. It is true that 65 per cent of our body is water, but that doesn’t mean that our bodies are made of water; this is simply because our cells contain water to keep chemical reactions going. Most of our body is actually made up of emptiness. Yes, you read that right – emptiness. As you know, everything in our bodies is made up of atoms, and atoms are mostly empty space; in fact, 99.9 per cent of the atom is empty space as nuclei and electrons occupy only 0.01 per cent, and the rest is empty. If we removed the empty space within these atoms, the human body would be the size of a sugar cube. Moreover, if you look at it chemically, our bodies are 65 per cent oxygen, 18 per cent carbon, 10 per cent hydrogen, and 3 per cent nitrogen, and the rest is just useless. So if Allah had said, ‘We made every living thing out of oxygen,’ then Muslims still would have said, ‘Allah told us this 1,400 years ago.’

As far as the claim of the human body being made of water is concerned, Muhammad was not the first person to claim this. The ancient Greek philosopher Thales, who was born in 624 BC, was the first person to propose that the human body is made out of water. Unlike the Quran, he actually gave details on how he believed the human body was made up of water, which was mainly incorrect. This was the common belief until the eighteenth century; Muhammad simply said what was already known at the time.

A scholar would say that obviously, Earth wasn’t there at the time of the Big Bang. Allah is simply telling us that the ingredients eventually needed for Earth are there, ingredients like hydrogen, which gave rise to big stars, which gave rise to heavier elements. In defence of Muslims, I can see how a naive Muslim in a madrasa can fall for the intellectual dishonesty of these Muslim scholars, but these scholars don’t tell you that this is what the very next verse says.

And We placed within the earth firmly set mountains, lest it should shift with them, and We made therein [mountain] passes [as] roads that they might be guided. (21:31)

Well, clearly, this shows that Earth and the heavens were created at the same time when, in fact, Earth showed up some nine billion years later, but Allah didn't feel the need to mention that. Either Allah is very slow with his work or the author of the Quran doesn't know what he's talking about. I stick with the latter.

Now you must ask, 'It still says Earth and heaven were sewn or stitched together. How could a Middle Eastern warlord know this?' Well, Muhammad was a smart human being, and the idea of Earth and heaven being together is actually much older than Islam. For example, the ancient Egyptians also believed that Earth and heaven were joined together when the Earth god Geb separated from his wife, Nut, the heaven goddess, and so there we have Earth and the heavens. The ancient Sumerians also believed that Earth and the heavens were separated when the heavens god An separated from his wife, the Earth goddess Ki.

There is one more verse I particularly like to recite from time to time as this just blows away the Quran and the Big Bang theory:

Indeed, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and earth in six days and then established Himself above the Throne. (7:54)

So if we buy that the Quran and the Big Bang theory are compatible with each other, then it means the Big Bang happened on day one and Earth showed up nine billion years later on day six of the Quran. This means Allah's one day is equal to 1.5 billion years. Some all-powerful god to wait that long when he can simply say, 'Be,' and it's done as per this verse:

Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, 'Be,' and it is. (2:117)

So he could say, 'Let there be Earth,' and *boom!* Job's done, he doesn't have

to wait billions of years or even days.

Finally, what about this verse?

It is We Who have built the universe with [Our creative] power, and verily, it is We Who are steadily expanding it. (51:47)

Remember how I said these Muslim scholars commit extreme intellectual dishonesty? Well, this a true example of it. We now know that the universe is expanding, so these modern Muslim scholars went back and reinterpreted their verses. However, the Quran doesn't say that the universe is expanding; these are the correct translations:

And [We destroyed] the people of Noah before; indeed, they were a people defiantly disobedient. And the heaven, We constructed with strength, and indeed, *We are [its] expander*. And the earth, We have spread out, and excellent is the preparer. (51:46–48, Sahih translation)

When you read the verse before and after the verse in question, you can see Allah is just bragging about his strength. He is simply saying that he first punished Noah's people because he is the creator of heaven, which is vast, and Earth, which he has spread out. He is simply saying to the naive Arab people that he can do anything. There is no mention of the universe expanding ever. To understand the discrepancy, let's check out some of these other translations:

Pickthal: We have built the heaven with might, and We it is who make the vast extent (thereof).

Yousaf Ali: With power and skill did We construct the firmament; for it is We who create the vastness of space.

Clearly, Allah is simply bragging about the universe being *vast*; anyone can look up at the night sky and assume it's big, very big. How big? These Middle Eastern peasants didn't know.

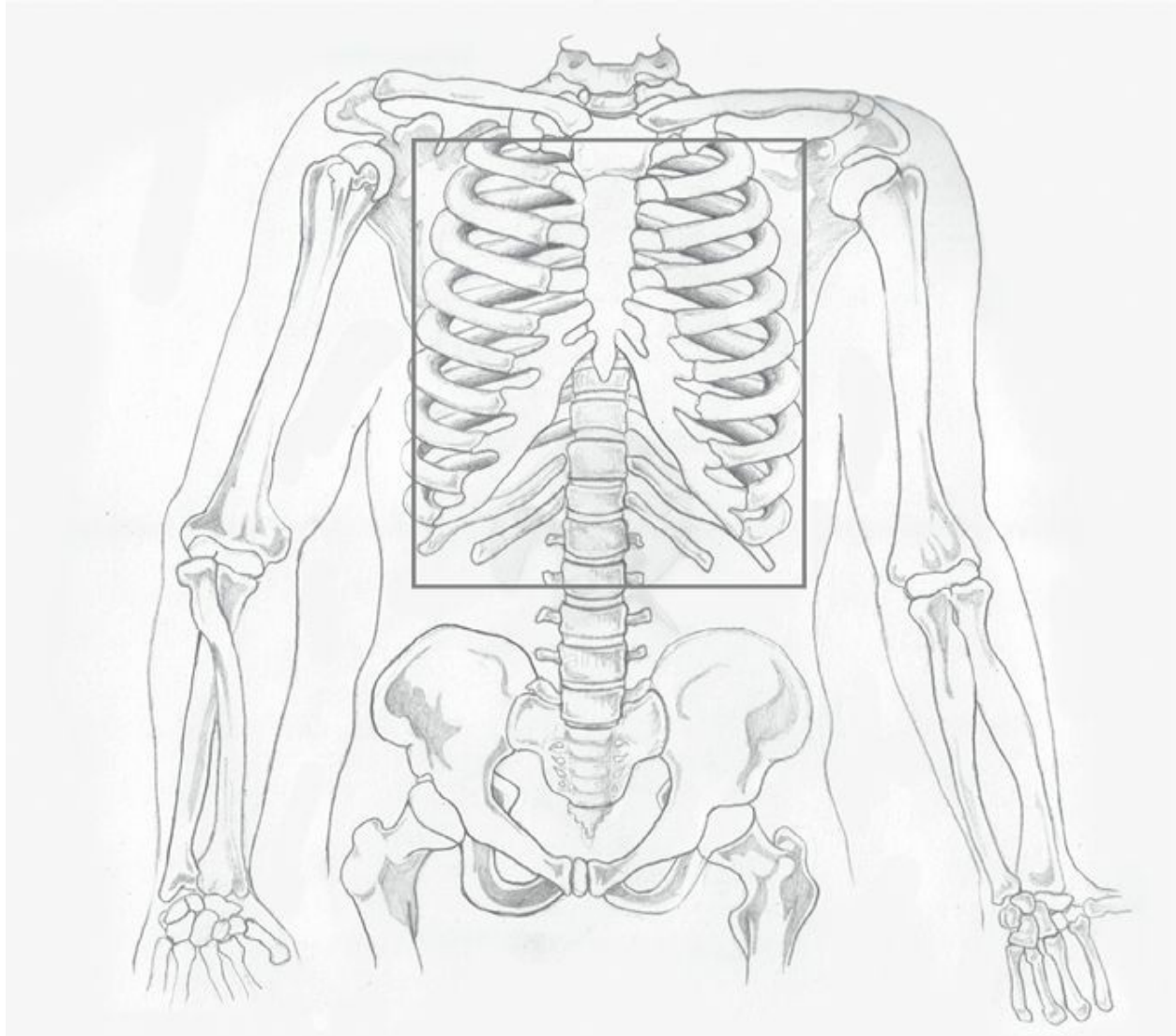
Embryology

Like the Big Bang, the second favourite claim of the Muslims is that the Quran explained the entire embryology process before science discovered the true process some 1,400 years later.

Before I debunk the main verse that Muslims love to use as evidence of the Quran's advanced knowledge, it is important to look into a couple of other claims of embryonic knowledge made by its author. These verses and a hadith will help us better understand where the author of the Quran is coming from when it comes to explaining embryology. Let's look at this verse:

He was created from a fluid, ejected, Emerging from between the backbone and the ribs. (86:6–7)

Muslim scholars don't often talk about this verse as they probably haven't found a way yet to spin it. According to this verse, a man is created by a fluid (sperm) that is produced between the backbone and the ribs. According to the Quran, this is roughly where the sperm is produced:



Like most other incorrect verses, Muslim scholars don't discuss the verses they haven't been able to manipulate. Who would have known that we had testicles hidden between our ribs and backbone? Some Muslim scholars go by the claim that fluids needed to produce semen come from the prostate, which is true; however, the prostate is also located nowhere near the ribs and the backbone.

The second verse is claiming that after the ejaculation of semen, it becomes a clinging clot, and then the sex of the baby is determined.

Had he not been a sperm from semen emitted? Then he was a clinging clot, and [Allah] created [his form] and proportioned [him].

And made of him two mates, the male and the female. (75:37–39)

Obviously, this is incorrect as the sex of the baby is determined at the very moment of conception. This claim of the Quran is also backed up by this accepted hadith:

The Prophet said, ‘At every womb, Allah appoints an angel who says, “O Lord! A drop of semen, O Lord! A clot. O Lord! A little lump of flesh.” Then if Allah wishes [to complete] its creation, the angel asks, “[O Lord!] Will it be a male or female, a wretched or a blessed, and how much will his provision be? And what will his age be?” So all that is written while the child is still in the mother’s womb ⁶⁸.’

It’s amazing how Muslims make claims about the scientific nature of these verses but totally ignore the angelic intervention, which is absolutely unscientific. For argument’s sake, even if we ignore this game of angels, the hadith is explaining the verse in detail, claiming semen becomes a clot and clot becomes flesh and then the gender of the baby is determined. The rest of the hadith is obviously pointless to discuss.

Now let’s look at the main verse that Muslim scholars confidently claim is evidence of the advanced embryonic knowledge given by Islam:

And certainly did We create man from an extract of clay. Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging. Then We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot, and We made the clot into a lump [of flesh], and We made [from] the lump bones, and We covered the bones with flesh; then We developed him into another creation. So blessed is Allah, the best of creators. (23:12–14)

For the sake of simplicity, Allah is claiming that he has created humans (I would rather use the word *humans* over *man*) with clay. Since there was no sperm available for the creation of Adam, Allah created him with clay; however, once that process started, he created this magical substance called sperm. Now this sperm is lodging firmly inside a womb; this sperm then

turns into a clot, and then it turns into flesh and bones, and *boom!* You have a human.

A lot of Muslims actually view this as the real process of child development inside the mother's womb. There are two ways of looking at this verse:

1. As a layperson who doesn't know the details but can observe from the outside, to a certain extent
2. A more critical analysis in light of modern knowledge

First Way

I am no embryologist, but even without this knowledge, I can tell that when we have sex, men discharge sperm, so it must have something to do with creating children. When this sperm goes inside a woman, it must do something that results in a child that comes out eight or nine months later. This is not that hard to understand or to predict. However, I don't know the details of this process as Allah gives no details of that. From the outside, it is easy to tell that this sperm will go and sit in a woman's belly (firm lodging) and that it will start from something small to something that grows bigger over time, as we can see the woman's belly getting bigger and bigger over time. This covers the verse up to 'firm lodging', which basically means it goes inside and lodges itself firmly. Nothing special so far. But that's not fair; the Quran does give a little more detail than I could as a layperson of that time. The Quran tells us that it becomes a 'clinging clot' and then forms into a lump of flesh. What does Allah mean by 'clinging clot'? As a seventh-century Arab man, I could probably give up and say Muhammad must have divine knowledge as I don't know what this clinging clot that then turns into flesh and bones is. Finally, we have a new baby 'creation' – again nothing too special. So even as a seventh-century Arab, there is not much in the verse apart from 'clinging clot' that I could not come up with on my own simply by observing the process from sex to a baby's birth.

Second Way

The second way of looking at it is much more interesting and obviously

better; why not use modern knowledge to enhance our world view? What did Muhammad know that a layperson of his time did not? Before I go into the details, I must address the bone of contention in this verse about the translation of a specific word. In this verse, Muhammad used the word *alaqah*, which has two meanings:

1. A clinging blood clot (used in the Sahih translation)
2. A leech-like substance (used by Haroon Yahya type of Muslims)

It is important to understand why this word was used as Muslims who use the second meaning claim that in the first stages of child development, the embryo looks like a leech as demonstrated in the figure below:

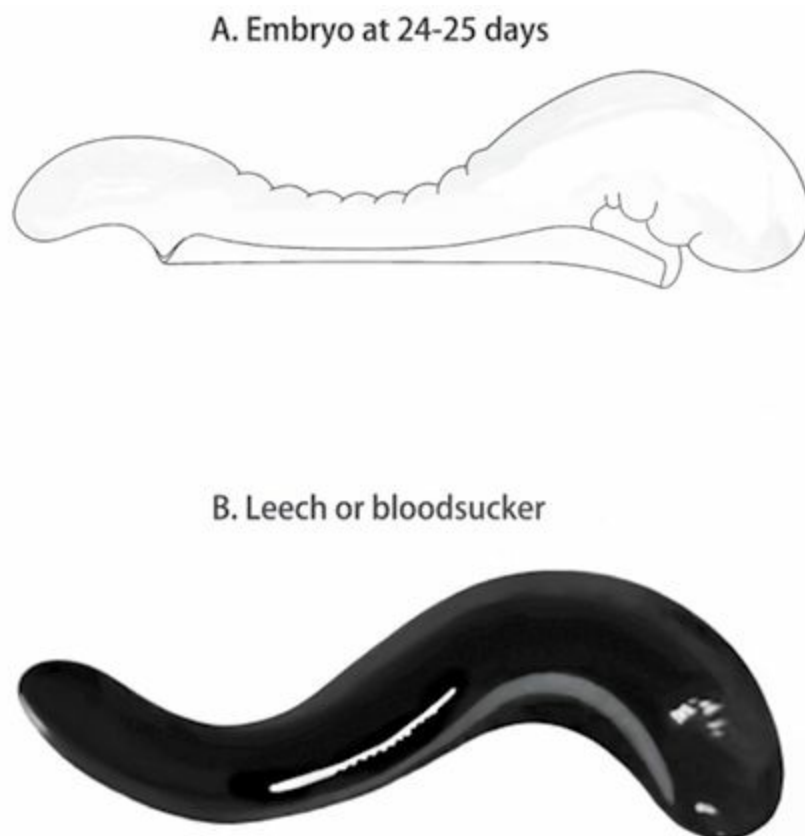


Figure 7.1

Courtesy Islampapers.com

This is probably the only stage where Muslims could stretch, straighten, and remove certain parts of the embryo to make it look like a leech; in reality,

however, this is what a 24-day-old embryo looks like:

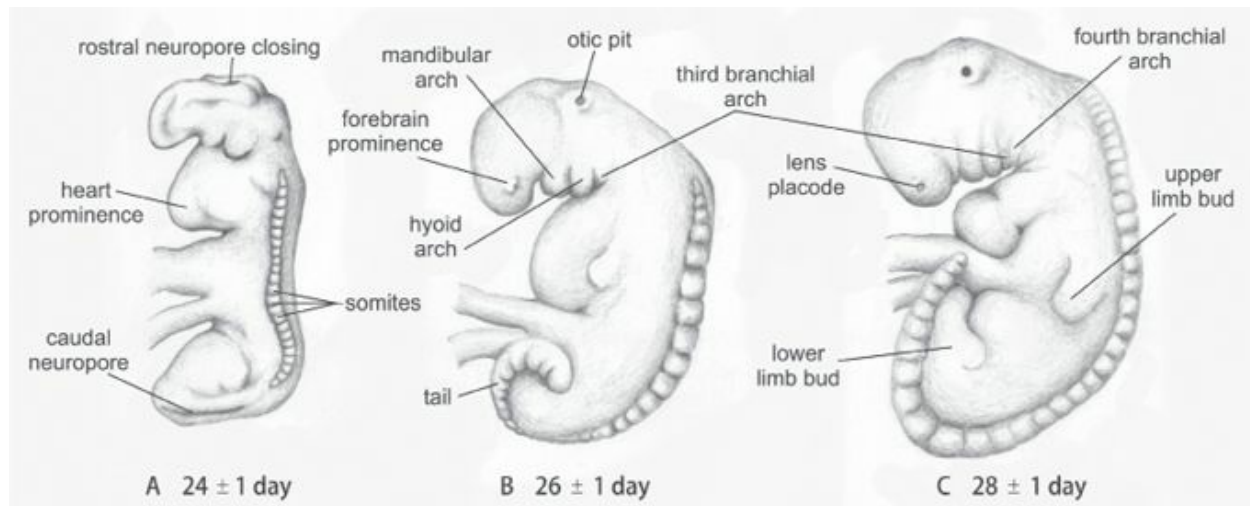


Figure 7.2

This embryo more closely resembles a kidney, but obviously, Muhammad didn't know what a kidney looked like, even though physicians before Muhammad knew what a kidney or a liver or a heart looked like. Notice in the first image how the apologists had conveniently straightened the embryo and removed the heart from the figure to make it look like a leech. It is also important to note that all the classical *tafsirs* translated the *alaqah* as a blood clot and never as a leech. Check out this hadith:

Allah's Apostle, the true and truly inspired, said, '[The matter of the Creation of] a human being is put together in the womb of the mother in forty days, and then he becomes a clot of thick blood for a similar period and then a piece of flesh for a similar period.' (Sahih Bukhari, volume 4, book 54, no. 430)

It is safe to conclude that Muhammad meant 'clinging clot' and not leech-like substance. If we go by the meaning of 'clinging clot', then it is simply false as there is never a stage in embryonic development where the embryo is a clinging blood clot or any blood clot for that matter. We need to look into the verse using our critical sense. As a layperson, I have already demonstrated there is nothing special in this verse, but still, why did Muhammad feel the need to mention it, and why was he so confident?

Basically, there are four stages of child development in Quranic verse:

1. Sperm's firm lodging (womb)
2. Clinging clot
3. Flesh and then bones
4. A new creation

Galen was a Greek physician who died in 210 AD, some five hundred years before Muhammad. He wrote extensively on the child development process, and this is what he wrote.

The first is that in which, as is seen both in abortions and in dissection, the form of the *semen prevails* [semen or *nutfah* in Arabic]. At this time, Hippocrates too, the all marvellous, does not yet call the conformation of the animal a foetus; as we heard just now in the case of semen voided in the sixth day, he still calls it semen.

But when it has been filled *with blood* [a clinging clot or *alaqah* in Arabic] and heart, brain, and liver are still unarticulated and unshaped yet have by now a certain solidarity and considerable size, this is the second period; the substance of the foetus has the form of flesh and no longer the form of semen. Accordingly, you would find that Hippocrates too no longer calls such a form semen but, as was said, foetus.

Also notice how Galen also referred to it as blood, not a leech. If the rest of Galen's work was copied, it is safe to assume Muhammad also copied this bit. Moreover, if Allah was trying to give some secret information, he could have used a better word than the one that would be confused with **blood** and **leech** later on. He further wrote the following:

The third period follows on this when, as was said, it is possible to see the three ruling parts clearly and a kind of outline, a silhouette, as it were, of all the other parts [flesh or *mudgah* in Arabic]. You will see the conformation of the three ruling parts more clearly, that

of the parts of the stomach more dimly, and much more still, that of the limbs. Later on, they form 'twigs', as Hippocrates expressed it, indicating by the term their similarity to branches.

The fourth and final period is at the stage when all the parts in the limbs have been differentiated, and at this part, Hippocrates the marvellous no longer calls the foetus an embryo only but already a child, too when he says that it jerks and moves as an animal now fully formed [a new creation or *khalqa* in Arabic [60](#)].

We can clearly see that Muhammad used the exact same steps that Galen had already explained some five hundred years before him. Galen's work was preserved and translated in Arabic in the early sixth century and actually explained the steps in a little more detail than Muhammad's Quran. Muslim scholars have been made well aware of Galen's work, which they obviously hadn't heard of.

The final point to observe from the first two verses is that the whole of a baby's creation is attributed to male sperm, which goes in a safe lodging, i.e. the womb. There is no other role of a woman's body mentioned such as the ovum (the female egg). You could metaphorically say that the sperm goes inside a woman and it turns into a baby, but we do know that sperm is useless inside a mother's womb without the egg. Infertile women still have wombs that can keep the sperm in that 'safe lodging'; however, if their ovum isn't working as it should, there will be no baby. In fact, polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) is a hormone imbalance that results in disrupted menstrual and ovulation cycles. It is the most common cause of infertility because of anovulation (where no ovulation occurs or no egg is released [67](#)). This is the same mistake Galen made and, therefore, his copier made. We can understand why Muhammad was confident putting this in the Quran as this was the believed view at the time thanks to Galen. Now how did Muhammad become aware of Galen's work?

There was a great school of medicine in Jundishapur, which is now South East Iran. There was an Arab physician, Harith Ibn Kalada, who went to

Jundishapur to learn more about medicine. When Harith came back to Mecca, Muhammad sent his followers to Harith for medical treatment. It is safe to assume Harith was aware of Galen's work and passed it onto Muhammad via his sick friends. When Muhammad was explaining this creation process to his scribe Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh, he, like most of Muhammad's followers, said, 'Blessed be God, the best of creators ⁶¹.' Muhammad included these words in the verse despite the fact they weren't Allah's words.

It is also important to note Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh noticed this behavior of Muhammad in other instances and left Islam, seeing clearly that Muhammad was adding and taking out words as he pleased, which was evidence that these were the words of Muhammad and not of some divine creature. This is why when Muhammad conquered Mecca, he ordered the killing of Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh, and no ransom was put on his life ⁶².

[Salt and Fresh Water Fallacy](#)

Some natural phenomena have been clearly explained and understood by modern science however Muslims still persist in believing their holy book over modern knowledge. Consider the two verses below:

And it is He who has released [simultaneously] the two seas, one fresh and sweet and one salty and bitter, and He placed between them a barrier and prohibiting partition. (25:53)

He released the two seas, meeting [side by side]; Between them is a barrier [so] neither of them transgresses. (55:19–20)

These two verses are clearly stating that Allah has created a barrier between fresh water and salt water, and they don't mix together. If you actually look at the point where fresh water meets salt water, it does seem like the two types of water are not mixing, and you can see the difference in the colouring of the water. Muhammad probably thought this is why fresh water in the rivers stays fresh and doesn't get contaminated by seawater.

The first point is that seawater doesn't contaminate rivers because rivers are

uphill, so it's always the river that flows into the ocean and not the other way around (unless the global sea level rises, in which case you get new rivers that are higher than the average sea level). A Muslim might ask why there seems to be a barrier between the ocean and the river. Well, the answer is very simple: fresh water has a different density from seawater, so when they collide, they are mixing very slowly underneath the surface.

If fresh water never mixed with salt water, we wouldn't have had the same water level throughout Earth's existence. We know that global temperatures are rising, which is causing the sea level to rise. A Muslim who believes that salt and fresh water do not mix should also deny the rising sea levels as they wouldn't rise if salt and fresh water did not mix. You can also get half a glass of seawater and half a glass of tap water and then mix them together in a glass and see what happens. The result of this simple experiment will blow away your Quranic verse.

Body of the Pharaoh (Ramses II)

There is ignorance and misunderstanding of the Quran, and then there is the simple distortion of facts. Consider this simple Quranic verse:

And We took the Children of Israel across the sea, and Pharaoh and his soldiers pursued them in tyranny and enmity until, when drowning overtook him, he said, 'I believe that there is no deity except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of the Muslims. Now? And you had disobeyed [Him] before and were of the corrupters? So today We will save you in body that you may be to those who succeed you a sign. And indeed, many among the people, of Our signs, are heedless.' (10:90–92)

Muslims take this verse as Allah telling the world that people before you (like Ramses II) were corrupt and that Allah preserved their body so he could be an example to those who dare to disobey Allah. This is what Allah is saying, but there is no evidence of it apart from the knowledge that almost all the pharaohs preserved their bodies by mummifying themselves, which was a

well-known fact during Muhammad's time.

Muslims claim that science confirms that the remains of Ramses II show signs of him drowning. It specifically says that Ramses II chased Moses into the split Red Sea, and when Allah closed the split, Ramses II converted to Islam. The next verse then says, 'We will save you in body so you are a sign of disgrace to the others who come along after you.' Well, when we say he is alive only in body, we generally take it as someone who is alive but barely. This term can also be used in a more metaphorical sense for a bad or cruel person to say, well, he is only alive in body but dead on the inside. Either way, the verse actually doesn't say anything about Ramses II's actual death.

But since it's an explanation to the verse that Muslims prefer, we'll try method B. There is no dispute amongst Egyptologists in rejecting this version of Ramses II's life. So where did this blatant lie come from? The first and only person to make the claim that Ramses II's remains showed sign of drowning is Dr Maurice Bucaille. Before I go further into what Dr Bucaille had to say, it is important to look into who Dr Bucaille was.

Dr Bucaille was a French physician and a member of the French Egyptology society. Basically, he was just a normal doctor just like the one you go to at your local clinic when you get sick. Yes, he was a member of an Egyptology society, but that does not make him an Egyptologist, just as being a member of an amateur astronomy group doesn't make me an astronomer. I would have to complete a PhD in astrophysics or something similar to be called an astronomer. Dr Bucaille had no formal training in anthropology or Egyptology.

So why did Dr Bucaille make up this claim? In 1973, Dr Bucaille became a family physician of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. Saudis have a history of promoting Islam by either violence or indoctrination. Dr Bucaille 'studied' the mummy of Ramses II in the '80s when it came to France and concluded that the presence of salts in the body of Ramses II shows that he must have drowned. He further went on to claim that the body of Ramses must have washed up on shore, where it was quickly gathered and mummified by the

Egyptians. As the story goes, Dr Bucaille was then told about the verse above. It is said (without firm evidence) that in his excitement, he said, 'I convert to Islam.' There is no reputable Egyptologist that I know of that has made similar claims to those of Dr Bucaille.

Second, the Quranic verse does not say that he was drowned and then washed up and was mummified. Mummification was a known process practiced by the Egyptians. The Greek historian Herodotus (known as the 'father of history') wrote in the fifth century BCE about Egyptian mummification practices, so by that time, educated Greeks were well aware of this Egyptian ritual. Educated Romans in subsequent centuries were familiar with Greek literature, so they knew as well. So even if we take the verse as a claim that Allah preserved the body of Ramses II, this claim cannot be taken seriously as ancient Egyptians had been preserving the bodies of their kings long before Ramses II. Moreover, this 'finding' of Dr Bucaille ignores the fact that Ramses II was 90 years old and in no position to chase Moses, even on his chariot. He had severe arthritis; he couldn't even walk let alone stand on a chariot over rough terrain, which requires a lot of effort.

Lastly, the salt in Ramses II's mummy is simply a preservative material used by the Egyptians when making a mummy. The same salt content can be found in every mummy. If we take Dr Bucaille's claim seriously, then we must assume that every pharaoh's mummy found died because of drowning. Dr Bucaille would have known about this salt content if he had studied other mummies, but I wonder why he concluded that Ramses II drowned.

Although Dr Bucaille never officially converted to Islam, even if we go by the Muslims' claim that he did, then a man who simply says 'I accept Islam' over one vague verse doesn't paint a good picture of his intelligence. In Dr Bucaille's defence, I don't think he was a man of low intelligence, so I doubt he said, 'I convert to Islam' after his mummy discovery, but even if he did, there are countless people who change their religions over various reasons, but this would be a very weak one.

[Knowledge of the Mountains](#)

This verse is actually not as propagated as a scientific miracle of the Quran as aggressively as the first three verses; however, some ‘modern Muslim scholars’ claim it as evidence of the divinity of the author:

Have We not made the earth a resting place? And the mountains as stakes? (78:6–7)

And He has cast into the earth firmly set mountains, lest it shift with you, and [made] rivers and roads that you may be guided. (16:15)

Even if you are a Muslim, you are probably thinking there’s nothing special about this verse. You are right; there is nothing special about it. Basically, this verse is saying that Allah has created Earth as a home for humans and put mountains on it. Obviously, nothing is special about it as we can see mountains don’t exist in the air; they are sitting on Earth. The second verse is simply saying that Allah has firmly lodged mountains on Earth so they do not move. At a first look, it seems nothing special, but like always, these modern Muslim ‘scholars’ twist and extract their own meaning out of these vague verses. Some Muslim scholars like the propagators of Islam-guide.com translate and interpret the verse as this:

Have We not made the earth as a bed, and the mountains as pegs? (78:6–7)

By inserting the word *pegs* (like those that are used to anchor a tent), the scholars here are saying the mountains you see above the surface have deeper roots you cannot see. Check out the figures below:

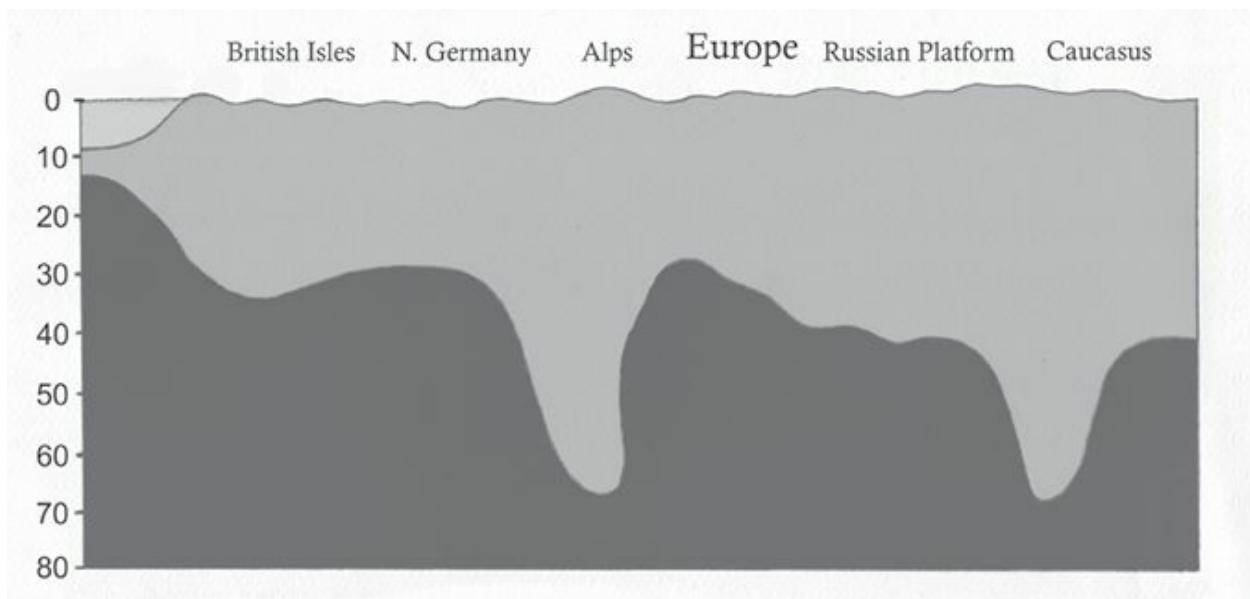


Figure 7.3

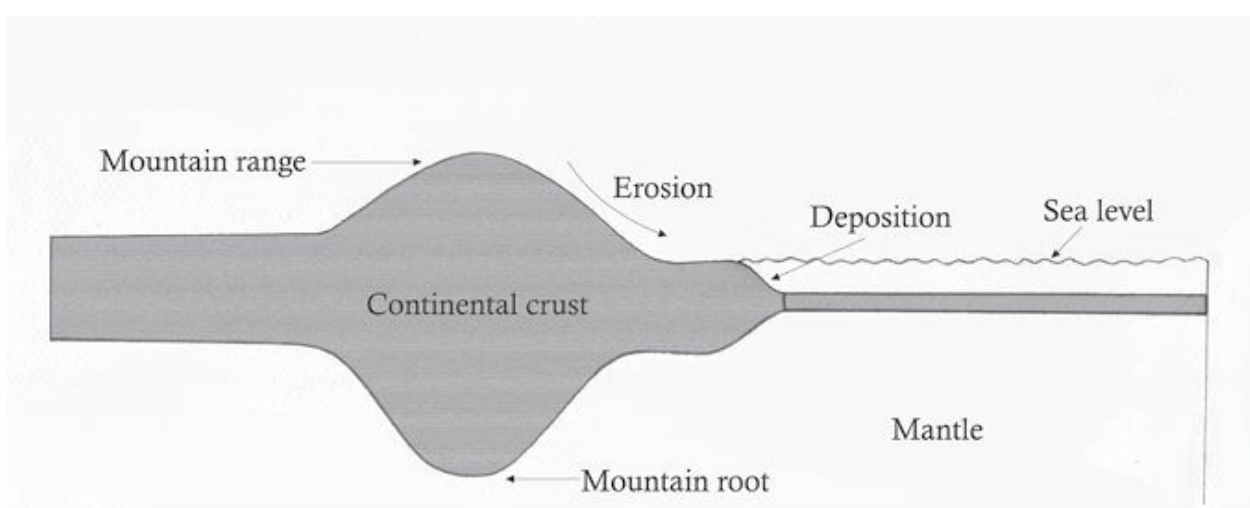


Figure 7.4

Courtesy of Islam-guide.com

If you just look at these figures, you can say, ‘Wow, the Quran must be a book of the divine.’ However, like most words of these Muslim scholars, this figure is also deceiving and highly selective.

First Point: It is true that mountains have roots; however, the claim Muhammad would not have known it is as far-fetched as the claim that Ramses II died chasing Moses. Books have mentioned the ‘roots of mountains’ since way before Muhammad’s time. Check out Job’s verse:

People assault the flinty rock with their hands and lay bare the roots of the mountains. (28:9)

Or what about Jonah?

To the roots of the mountains, I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, LORD my God, brought my life up from the pit. (2:6)

Unlike Muslims, Christians are not very good at nitpicking their Bible verses and making claims of advanced scientific knowledge. Muhammad probably plagiarised this from the Bible like a number of other stories. Some Muslims will say that since the Bible is also a book of God, although mostly contaminated by humans, it would still have some divine knowledge in it, such as the roots of the mountains, Noah's flood, Adam and Eve's story, etc.

Second Point: Pegs, roots, or stakes are not the best way to describe the mountains and their depths. If we look at fold mountains (like the Himalayas, the Alps, and the Andes), we can see that these mountains formed when two tectonic plates collided head-on and the momentum pushed matter up towards the sky and down towards the core of Earth, resulting in mountain ranges. It is true that the mountain we see above the surface is far smaller than the mountain below the surface. However, pegs, nails, and stakes are all driven from the top with deep roots; these mountains are the result of a head-on collision between two land masses, not a big rock that has been hammered deep down into Earth's crust by Allah. A better analogy would have been colliding two pieces of butter, and as a result, you will get one big piece of butter, where some of it will go up and some of it will go down. This will explain both the formation of the mountain as well as its structure. Obviously, this is too much science for a seventh-century Arab, so we don't have a verse like that. Also, the peg description to explain a mountain's root does not work because this root is actually not a part of a single mountain; it is a part of the whole system. A better verse would have been implying all the mountains you see have one solid mass or a root under them. However, 'And the mountains as pegs' implies there is a mountain, and it goes deep below

the surface, which is simply not the case. This verse would have made more sense in case of a single mountain as shown in Figure 7.4; however, fold mountains are mountain ranges where multiple mountains have the same root.

This is the problem with vague verses; people can interpret them any way they want. Imagine if the only form of mountain creation was asteroids from outer space hitting Earth's surface. Instead of disintegrating, 70 per cent of the asteroid would go deep into Earth's surface, and the remaining 30 per cent stays above the surface. This verse will fit perfectly to explain that situation as well as Allah is saying,

We have put mountains on the Earth and hammered them deep in the earth like pegs.

Allah probably meant the latter rather than the former explanation. After all, everything is simple in the Quranic world view; Earth has been spread out, the sky is sitting on invisible pillars, and the heavens will be rolled up like a book scroll. Seems more like poetry than science.

Third Point: Lastly, fold mountains are not the only type of mountain. There are other types, such as block mountains, volcanoes, plateau mountains, and dome mountains. Check out this cross-section of a volcano; you can clearly see the root of this volcano is nothing like a peg or stake.

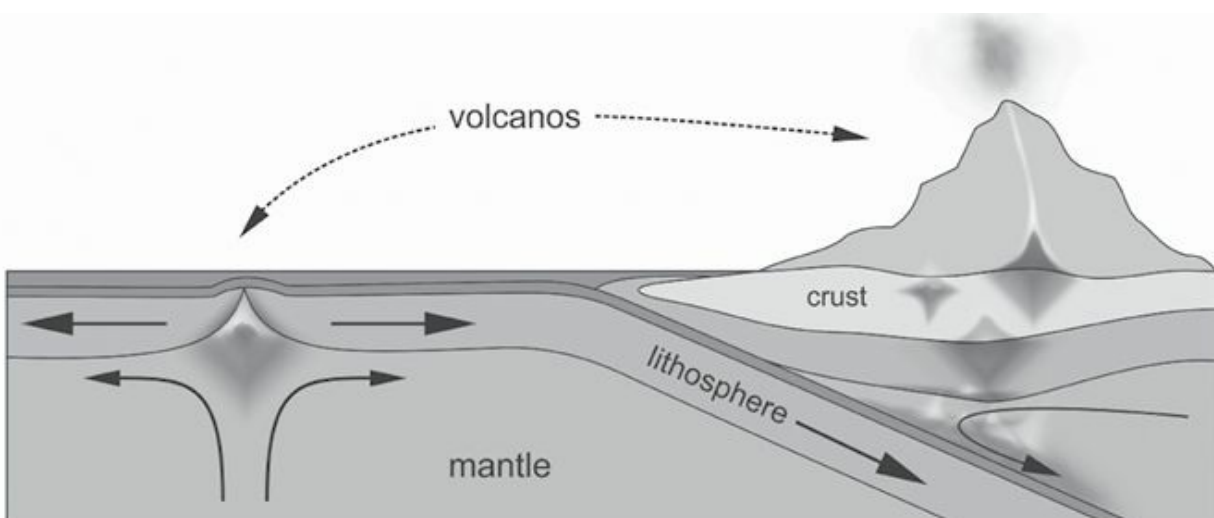


Figure 7.3

Courtesy of Richard Foa Katz in *The Deep Roots of Volcanoes*

Or consider a cross-section of a plateau mountain. There is no stake- or peg-like root in this case either.

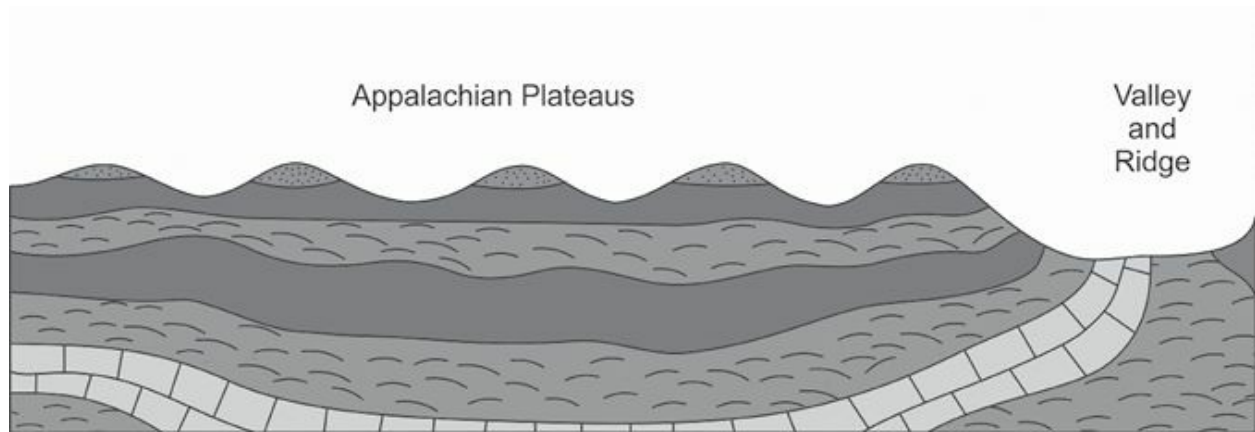


Figure 7.4

Courtesy of Radford University

I am willing to grant that if you are speaking metaphorically, you can call the root of the mountain a peg or stake, but you cannot accept it as a scientific fact. If I were Allah, I would have written the verse something like this:

Have you not seen how we collide layers of Earth to form mountains, although we have many other ways to create them?

If Allah wants us to believe in him, then he could surely do better than giving us these vague verses.

[Darkness in the Sea](#)

Or [they are] like darkneses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds – darkneses, some of them upon others. When one puts out his hand [therein], he can hardly see it. And he to whom Allah has not granted light – for him, there is no light. (24:40)

I was almost not going to include this as there is absolutely nothing special in this verse, but in the interest of being thorough, I thought I would include it.

One doesn't have to go to the bottom of the ocean to work out how dark it would be down there. You can sink your head in a river and see it gets darker and darker towards the bottom; I noticed this when I first swam in the ocean. The rest of the verse is stating the obvious as well. There is darkness in the deep ocean (it actually starts getting dark around forty metres, which is not really that deep compared to the actual depths of the ocean). There are waves over the waves, and then we have clouds. A 10-year-old child can notice that.

[The Quran and the Cerebrum](#)

No! If he does not stop, We will take him by the *naseyah* [front of the head], a lying, sinful *naseyah*! (96:15–16)

First Point: It always amazes me how these modern Muslim scholars find these meanings for words after science has discovered something close to what the verse can be manipulated into. Muslim scholars keep reinterpreting these verses to further their claim that they must have been written by some divine being as they have advanced knowledge of the world. Obviously, this is intellectual dishonesty as we always get new modern interpretations when science has already discovered it. For example, in this verse, the word *naseyah* has recently been translated as the 'frontal lobe of the brain', but when we look at all the older translations, this word has been translated as 'forelock' or the hair at the front of your head falling on your forehead. Let's look at some other translations:

No! If he does not desist, We will surely drag him by the forelock.
(Sahih International)

Let him beware! If he desist not, We will drag him by the forelock.
(Yousuf Ali)

If we take it as 'forelock', then the verse perfectly makes sense. 'We will grab/drag them by their forelock' – a little violent, but it makes sense. How can you grab someone by the frontal lobe? You can grab someone by the hair, hands, or feet etc., but you can't grab someone by the intestines, kidneys, or the frontal lobe.

The second part of the verse begs the question: how can hair be lying and sinful? When Muslims bow to Allah in prayer, the front of their heads, along with their hair, touch the ground. Well, if you are not bowing to Allah, then it means the front of the hair isn't bowing to Allah in prayer, so Allah is angry and calling them lying and sinful forelocks. These Muslim scholars are clever as they are claiming *naseyah* means the front of the head, so yes, I accept if it meant the front of the head, then Allah could be calling it lying and sinful as well. As addressed previously, these vague verses can be interpreted or misinterpreted any way you like.

This word has been used on two other occasions in the Quran, and it makes perfect sense that *naseyah* is referring to the forelock and not the frontal lobe:

The sinners will be known by their marks: and they will be seized by their forelocks and their feet. (55:41, Yousuf Ali translation)

The criminals will be known by their marks, and they will be seized by the forelocks and the feet. (55:41, Sahih International)

Indeed, I have relied upon Allah, my Lord and your Lord. There is no creature but that He holds its forelock. Indeed, my Lord is on a path [that is] straight. (11:56, Sahih International)

My Lord and your Lord. Not an animal, but He doth grasp it by the forelock! Lo! my Lord is on a straight path. (11:56, Pickthal)

In none of the above instances does 'frontal lobe' make sense as a translation as it is evident Allah has a habit of grabbing people by their forelocks and, in this case, feet. If *naseyah* meant the frontal lobe, then it simply wouldn't make sense to grab the internal frontal lobe and the feet.

Second Point: Let us just agree for argument's sake that Allah is indeed referring to the prefrontal cortex by using the word *naseyah*. Since Muslim scholars 'discovered' this meaning, science has made more discoveries. fMRIs are now being used more and more to determine whether a person is

lying or not. Below is the image that shows the part of the brain used to lie or deceive.

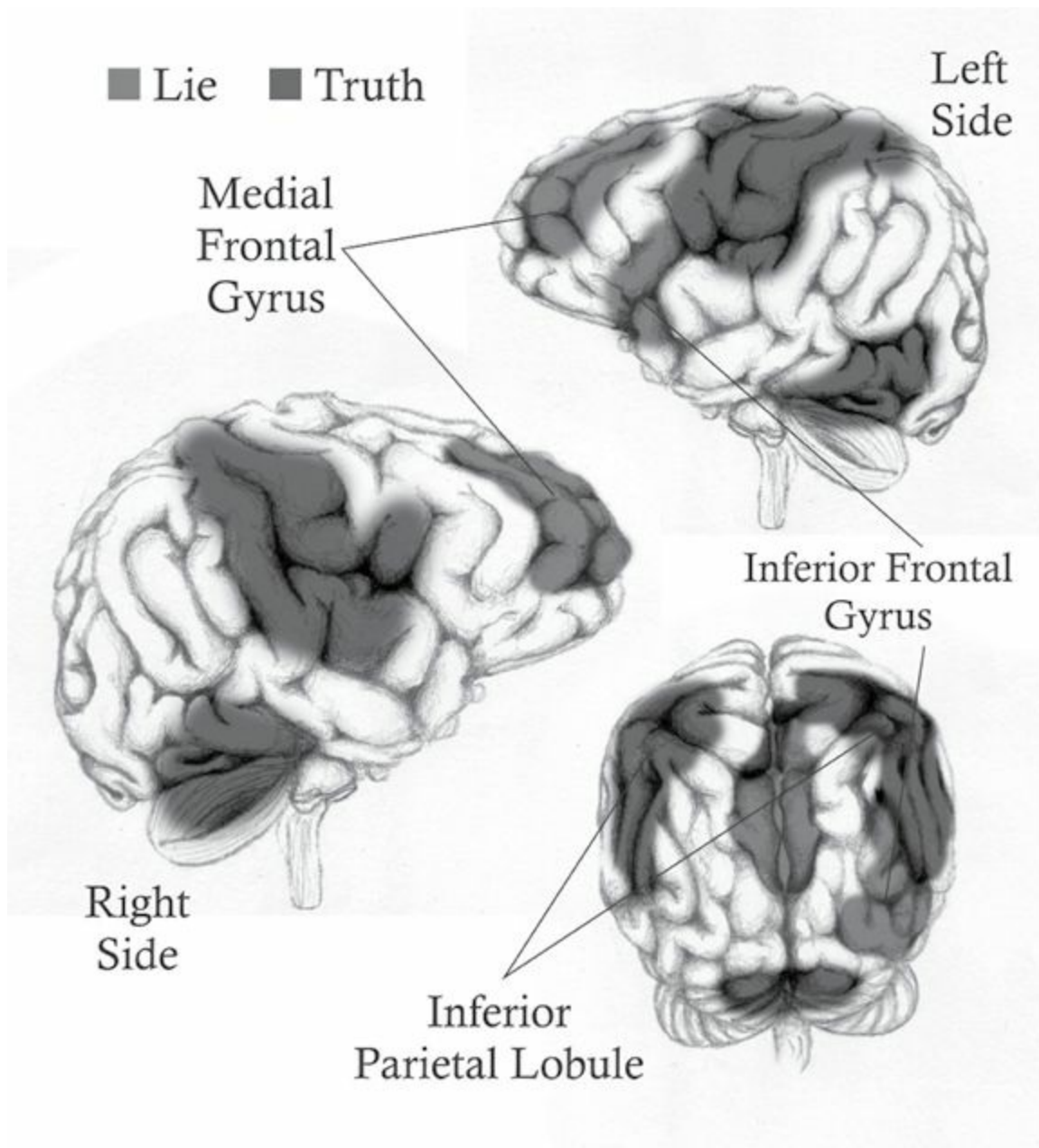


Figure 7.5
Courtesy of NolieMRI

These Muslim websites show the side-on view of the brain that gives the illusion of these areas at the front of the brain; however, if we see it from the top, it is actually the left to the centre of the brain. Yes, this part of the brain is technically in the frontal lobe, but the 'frontal lobe' is the way we have

structured the brain for study. Scientists could easily divide it further into smaller regions and call it something else, just like how the North Pole is not really up; it is just how we have mapped our planet. We could have easily had the Earth map upside down, and the North Pole would have been at the bottom.

Rain and Hail

Do you not see that Allah drives clouds? Then He brings them together; then He makes them into a mass, and you see the rain emerge from within it. And He sends down from the sky mountains [of clouds] within which is hail, and He strikes with it whom He wills and averts it from whom He wills. The flash of its lightning almost takes away the eyesight. (24:43)

This is another pretty ordinary effort by some Muslim scholars to claim there is divine knowledge in this verse. Ancient cultures understood the relation between clouds and rains/hail for a very long time.

Around 650 BC, the Babylonians tried to predict short-term weather changes based on the appearance of clouds and optical phenomena such as haloes. Aristotle is considered the founder of meteorology; he tried to explain the weather through the interaction of the four elements: earth, fire, air, and water. Aristotle's student Theophrastus produced the first book on weather signs, listing observations used to forecast weather, many of which are still used to this day.

In ancient Greece, people used their knowledge to their advantage, focusing on the air's movement (wind) as well as the significance of the sun and moon's positions in the sky to forecast phenomena such as tides and improve everyday tasks involving agriculture or sailing ⁶⁴.

In the above verse, the author of the Quran is simply saying the obvious, that Allah moves clouds and causes rain and hail. The second part of the verse, showing how merciful Allah is, then says he has control over whom he hits with this hail and lightning. Again, these natural occurrences go hand in

hand, i.e. rain, clouds, hail, and lightning. There is nothing special about this verse.

Flat Earth

In Muhammad's time, two views about Earth's shape were common:

- 1: Earth is round (ancient Greeks and Indians).
- 2: Earth is flat (common Arab view in the seventh century).

As seen in the case of embryology, Muhammad plagiarised some work of the ancient Greeks; however, this time, he went with his gut feeling that Earth is flat. Let's look at some of the Quranic verses that show Earth being spread out like a carpet:

[He] who made for you the earth a bed [spread out] and the sky a ceiling. (2:22)

And the earth – We have spread it and cast therein firmly set mountains and caused to grow therein [something] of every well-balanced thing. (15:19)

[It is He] who has made for you the earth as a bed [spread out] and inserted therein for you roadways and sent down from the sky rain and produced thereby categories of various plants. (20:53)

[The one] who has made for you the earth a bed and made for you upon it roads that you might be guided. (43:10)

And the earth – We spread it out and cast therein firmly set mountains and made grow therein [something] of every beautiful kind. (50:7)

And the earth, We have spread out, and excellent is the preparer. (51:48)

And Allah has made for you the earth, an expanse. (71:19)

Have We not made the earth a resting place? And the mountains as stakes? (78:6–7)

And after that, He spread the earth. (79:30)

In all the nine verses mentioned above, all the common translations such as Pickthal, Yousuf Ali, and Sahih International have referred to Earth as ‘spread out’, ‘like a carpet’, or as a ‘wide expanse’. You cannot roll a carpet on a round object, nor can you spread out a ball, and you can certainly not define a round object as a wide expanse.

First Point: Most Muslims are actually ignorant of these verses and do not know that the Quran says Earth is flat. If Muslims were actually educated on the Quran, there would be another flat Earth movement in the Muslim world as well. Muslims who have actually embraced the idea of the round Earth and are aware of these verses have accepted they are not to be taken literally. They say Earth seems flat to us given the size difference, so Allah is only referring it from a human’s point of view. How convenient for Muslims to pick the human point of view when it suits them, and when it doesn’t, they claim divine knowledge. Humans definitely did not know in Muhammad’s time that the frontal lobe has anything to do with lying, but since they found that it can be manipulated into a different meaning, they will go with that. If we accept that Allah is only talking from a human’s point of view, then there can be no future knowledge mentioned in the Quran as it would be pointless to mention unknown scientific facts as they were unknown to humans of the time. But Muslim scholars twist and turn their verses whenever it suits them.

Second Point: Even by the manipulative standards of these Muslim scholars, it is actually very hard for Muslims to manipulate all nine above-mentioned verses. Like always, they now had to find one verse that they could manipulate or find a single word in the verse that could be somehow changed to conform to the modern world view. Eventually, they found it. Zakir Naik and Haroon Yahya translate the last verse as follows:

And we have made the earth Egg shaped. (79:30)

Again, it's only the modern scholars who find new meanings for the words. All the other words in the eight other verses have nothing to do with any egg; however, the Arabic word *dahaha* used in the Quran verse above supposedly has a dual meaning, i.e. 'egg' and 'spread out'. So which meaning should we pick? An egg or 'spread out' (flat)? Obviously, if the author of the Quran is saying 'spread out' in eight other instances and, in the ninth verse, has a word that has dual meanings, you should pick the one that more closely resembles the meaning in the previous eight instances. The word used for eggs in the Quran is *bayzun* in 37:49. Even most Muslim scholars don't agree with this distortion of Zakir Naik and Haroon Yahya.

Third Point: Unlike Naik and Yahya, who changed the meaning of a word, some Muslim scholars have adopted a different approach to distorting the facts. These Muslim scholars claim that the above nine verses don't actually contradict a round Earth. They say below verse is the evidence of a round Earth:

He created the heavens and earth in truth. He wraps the night over the day and wraps the day over the night and has subjected the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. Unquestionably, He is the Exalted in Might, the Perpetual Forgiver. (39:50)

This verse actually has another major scientific problem with it, which I will explain shortly; however, some Muslim scholars claim that Allah is telling us, 'He wraps the night over the day and day over the night,' which indicates that Earth is round. If it was flat, then there would have been sudden day and night everywhere on Earth. If Earth was flat, then yes, it would have been day everywhere on Earth at once. However, this is coming from the assumption that the author of the Quran knew it. There is no way Muhammad would have known if it was daytime in Rome when it was daytime in Mecca.

These scholars also claim that the 'wrapping' of day and night indicate circular motion as you can't wrap a flat object. Allah is clearly outlining the different phases of the day, i.e. sunrise, morning, midday, afternoon, twilight,

and dark. It is obvious that day slowly turns into night and night slowly turns into day; wrapping is simply referring to the gradual change over the course of a day. Consider slowly wrapping a tray: you start from the left, and now you are gradually moving towards the right of the tray, and the parts that are being covered by the wrapping paper are getting submerged in the darkness. This is exactly what Allah is referring to by wrapping day into night, and it does not require a round Earth to make sense.

Geocentric Model

Unlike the round Earth being known to ancient Greeks and Hindus, the geocentric model, i.e. the sun orbiting Earth, was the common world view until the Copernican revolution, so Muhammad had no choice but to go with the geocentric model. Let's look at the verse below:

He created the heavens and earth in truth. He wraps the night over the day and wraps the day over the night and has subjected the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. Unquestionably, He is the Exalted in Might, the Perpetual Forgiver. (39:5)

Notice how Muslims used this verse to justify their claim of Earth being round, but when it comes to day and night being caused by the orbit of the sun, they make a 180-degree turn and say the orbit of the sun Allah is talking about is the sun's orbit around the centre of the Milky Way. No ancient Greek, Indian, or Egyptian knew about sun's orbit around the Milky Way, and neither did Muhammad. This is a laughable claim as it says nothing about the sun's orbit around the supermassive black hole located at the centre of the Milky Way. When it came to Earth being flat, these scholars simply said Allah is talking from a human's perspective, so how come Allah is not talking about the sun going around Earth and playing a part in the day and night as this is what the human perspective was at that time? Clearly, the orbit of the sun is being discussed in the context of day and night in not only the above verse but also in all the below verses:

And He subjected for you the sun and the moon, continuous [in orbit], and subjected for you the night and the day. (14:33)

And He has subjected for you the night and day and the sun and moon, and the stars are subjected by His command. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who reason. (16:12)

And it is He who created the night and the day and the sun and the moon; all [heavenly bodies] in an orbit are swimming. (21:33)

Do you not see that Allah causes the night to enter the day and causes the day to enter the night and has subjected the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term, and that Allah, with whatever you do, is Acquainted? (31:29)

He causes the night to enter the day, and He causes the day to enter the night and has subjected the sun and the moon – each running [its course] for a specified term. (35:13)

It is not allowable for the sun to reach the moon, nor does the night overtake the day, but each, in an orbit, is swimming. (36:40)

Indeed, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and earth in six days and then established Himself above the Throne. He covers the night with the day, [another night] chasing it rapidly; and [He created] the sun, the moon, and the stars, subjected by His command. (7:54)

And of His signs are the night and day and the sun and moon. Do not prostrate to the sun or to the moon but prostrate to Allah, who created them, if it should be Him that you worship. (41:37)

I don't need to explain all the above-mentioned verses as you can clearly see the author of the Quran believed day and night were caused by the sun and moon's orbit. Throughout history, humans have associated day with the sun and night with the moon, and Muhammad was no different; he also thought

that the sun orbits Earth and causes day and night. If Allah was somehow talking about the sun's orbit around the Milky Way, then why did he have to throw in day and night in each and every verse above? There is an example where Allah is not talking about the sun and moon's orbit in the context of day and night:

It is Allah who erected the heavens without pillars that you [can] see; then He established Himself above the Throne and made subject the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. He arranges [each] matter; He details the signs that you may, of the meeting with your Lord, be certain. (13:2)

Even here, the Quran is mentioning the sun and moon's orbit as though they are similar, but we certainly cannot deduce that Allah is talking about day and night. In previous verses, if Allah wasn't talking about the sun orbiting Earth, then why did he mention night and day in the same verse as the orbits of the sun and the moon? As above, when he's making the point about the creation of the sun and the moon, he is simply talking about it without referencing it to anything else as it would have been irrelevant in the discussion. However, when he is talking about day and night, he is specifically mentioning the orbits of the sun and the moon. Check out this verse:

And a sign for them is the night. We remove from it [the light of] day, so they are [left] in darkness. And the sun runs [on course] toward its stopping point. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing. (36:37–38)

I wonder what the stopping point of the sun is. Clearly, Allah is again speaking of the sun's orbit in the context of day and night, but a Muslim scholar would twist the interpretation and say Allah is only speaking from a human's perspective.

This next verse is an open-and-shut case:

Have you not considered your Lord – how He extends the shadow, and if He willed, He could have made it stationary? Then We made

the sun for it an indication. (25:45)

This time, Allah is attributing the sun's movement with the shadow. He is aware that the shadows move because of the movement of the sun in the sky; i.e. when the sun is directly over your head at midday, your shadow is the smallest, but as the day progresses, your shadow gets bigger and bigger. He is, as he is always, boasting about his powers and is saying if he wanted, he could have made stationary shadows but used the sun to make them change sizes. If this is the case, what possible link could shadows have with the sun otherwise? What could the sun's orbit around the centre of the Milky Way have to do with shadows on Earth? Obviously, this passage has nothing to do with the sun's orbit around the Milky Way. If the sun *did* orbit around Earth, then it would have made perfect sense, but as we know, the sun doesn't orbit around Earth; this proves this Quranic verse null and void.

The Quran is known to be vague when it tries to address unknown universal phenomena; however, in this case, it is clearly about the sun's orbit. Hadiths, like in other cases, give a more detailed perspective of Muhammad's thought process. Check out this hadith:

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Dharr that the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) one day said, 'Do you know where the sun goes?'

They replied, 'Allah and His Apostle know best.'

He (the Holy Prophet) observed, 'Verily, it [the sun] glides till it reaches its resting place under the Throne. Then it falls prostrate and remains there until it is asked, "Rise up and go to the place whence you came," and it goes back and continues emerging out from its rising place and then glides till it reaches its place of rest under the Throne and falls prostrate and remains in that state until it is asked, "Rise up and return to the place whence you came," and it returns and emerges out from its rising place, and then it glides [in such a normal way] that the people do not discern anything [unusual in it]

till it reaches its resting place under the Throne. Then it would be said to it, “Rise up and emerge out from the place of your setting,” and it will rise from the place of its setting.’ The Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) said, ‘Do you know when it would happen? It would happen at the time when faith will not benefit one who has not previously believed or has derived no good from the faith.’ (Sahih Muslim, 1:297)

According to this hadith, not only does the sun actually orbit Earth, but also, it actually prostrates (lying face down in submission). It also claims that on Judgement Day, the sun will rise from the west, which obviously cannot happen unless Earth starts spinning in the opposite direction. There should be absolutely no doubt in any one’s mind that the Quran supported a geocentric model.

Sun and Moon Being Similar

The author of the Quran actually thought that the sun and moon were the same size and of equal distance from Earth. Consider the below verse, where all-merciful Allah is describing Judgement Day:

And the moon darkens. And the sun and the moon are joined. Man will say on that Day, ‘Where is the [place of] escape?’ (75:8–10)

Basically, Allah is saying that the moon will darken and join the sun to wreak havoc on Earth. The sun is about four hundred times larger than the moon, and coincidentally, it is also four hundred times farther from the moon than we are as well. Because of this cosmological coincidence, they appear the same size in the sky. This is the only time in the history of our Earth that we are witnessing this coincidence. For example, at the time of the dinosaurs, the moon was a little closer to Earth, and hence looked bigger than the sun. If the sun takes one step towards the moon and Earth, it will obliterate all life on Earth. The sun can never be joined with the moon because by the time the sun comes to us, the moon and life would have already been long gone; in fact, the moon would actually be torn into pieces because of the gravitational

force on it, so there will never be any collision. The sun wouldn't even notice a slight bump. There can simply be no comparison made between the two astronomical objects. Consider Figure 7.6 for a better understanding:



Figure 7.6

Check out this verse:

It is not allowable for the sun to reach the moon, nor does the night overtake the day, but each, in an orbit, is swimming. (36:40)

The Quran specifically claims their orbits are similar in nature, i.e. around Earth, and they are never to collide unless Allah wants it, as is the case on Judgement Day. Anyone who says this verse doesn't infer that the moon and sun both orbit Earth should explain why Allah is mentioning the orbits of the sun and moon in the same verse in relation to day and night. To say that the sun is not allowed to collide with the moon is like saying a house in the

United States is not going to collide with a car being driven in Australia. Obviously, they are not going to collide because they are not moving relative to each other and are nowhere near each other. A better example would have been that Mars is not allowed to collide with Earth as they are both orbiting the sun.

[Moon Splitting](#)

The Hour has come near, and the moon has split [in two]. (54:1)

This verse is so small that I would have thought Muslims would use the metaphorical card on it; however, Muslims believe that when Muhammad was asked to show a miracle, he literally split the moon into two pieces. If the moon was split into two pieces, then civilisations around this time – such as the Indians, Romans, Persians, and Chinese – would have witnessed it also; however, none of those civilisations mentioned it anywhere.

Modern Muslims on the Internet actually use a photo of the moon as evidence of it being split in two pieces in the past.

This is another desperate and laughable claim of these Muslims.

First Point: Rilles (the grooves in the picture) are similar to gorges and canyons and are found on other planets such as Mars and Venus and some other moons as well. Were they all split?

Second Point: The Hadley Rille is only 130 kilometres long; if this rille was evidence of the moon's splitting, it should go all around the moon, but it doesn't. It occupies only a small portion of the moon's surface.

[Flying Horse](#)

Although the dates are not exact, it is commonly believed that on the night of 26 February 621 AD, Muhammad was visited by the archangel Gabriel, who brought with him a flying horse, Buraq, who first took Muhammad to the farthest mosque (believed to be the Al-Aqsa mosque) and then to the seven layers of heaven. Almost all the details of Muhammad's journey come from

hadiths and not the Quran. Since it is easier for Muslims to discredit hadiths, I believe that in the evolution of Islam, later generations of Muslims will discredit these hadiths of Muhammad flying on a winged horse. This flying horse is a major source of ridicule of Muslims among non-Muslims; it is akin to other mythological creatures of past civilisations, such as Pegasus and Bennu, the bird of fire.

Like Pegasus and Bennu, there is obviously no evidence of Buraq. Unlike the ancient Greek and Egyptian mythologies, Buraq is more hands-on in his dealings with humans like Muhammad. Sahih Bukhari has the whole account in detail, narrated by Malik bin Sasaa, that Muhammad told them someone came to him, cut open his chest, like in open-heart surgery, pulled his heart out, and then washed it with ‘belief’ from the golden tray of belief and then returned it to its original place without leaving any scars.

Then a white animal which was smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey was brought to me. The animal’s step [was so wide that it] reached the farthest point within the reach of the animal’s sight. I was carried on it, and Gabriel set out with me till we reached the nearest heaven. [81](#)

Afterwards, Muhammad went to heaven, met Jesus and Moses on different layers of heaven, and, upon the advice of Moses, asked Allah to reduce the prayers from fifty prayers a day to five times a day. The hadiths actually claim that this whole journey was a literal event and not Muhammad’s dream. Realistically, it could only be one of two things: either Muhammad dreamed it and thought it was real or he simply made it up. I think he probably dreamed it and then thought he’d see if people believed him.

Muhammad must have been sceptical about it as he is not very expressive when it comes to mentioning miracles in the Quran. Most miracles attributed to him come from hadiths except for the one-line moon-splitting verse, which was so vague that any Muslim could have discarded it as metaphorical. Hadiths are a true reflection of Muhammad’s life and character, and most information about him actually comes from them.

Just like I have no way to disprove Pegasus, dragons, and unicorns ever existing, there is no way for me to disprove this event other than the fact that both common sense (horses don't fly) and critical sense (what is more likely, a flying horse or a lie?) suggest that this event probably never took place. Imagine all the knowledge Muhammad could have acquired from this amazing journey on a splendid spaceship. He would have flown up in space; he would have seen Earth from the space and maybe the Milky Way, depending on where this heaven actually was. Yet he went up there, without an oxygen tank or a space suit and didn't notice that Earth is actually round and that the sun doesn't orbit Earth, and all he did was to have a little chat with Jesus and Moses and ask Allah to reduce the number of prayers for the Muslims.

Even when I am discussing this, I feel like I am discussing a fantasy novel, but it is believed to be literally true by over a billion Muslims. How can any sane person not see problems with stories like these? This story is so fantastical that I am confident that future Muslim generations will simply discard it and save themselves from the embarrassment of Muhammad's flying horse.

[Jonah and His Whale](#)

This is another bad example of plagiarism; Yunus's story about being swallowed by a large fish or a whale was mentioned in the book of Jonah. Check out these verses from the Quran:

And indeed, Jonah was among the messengers. [Mention] when he ran away to the laden ship. And he drew lots and was among the losers. Then the fish swallowed him while he was blameworthy. And had he not been of those who exalt Allah, He would have remained inside its belly until the Day they are resurrected. But We threw him onto the open shore while he was ill. (37:139–145)

First of all, the only fish that could potentially swallow an entire human is a sperm whale as they are known to swallow squids. All other whales have

oesophagi far too small to swallow human adults. The key question is what happens once a sperm whale swallows a human. Whenever an animal is swallowed, it is likely to suffocate within one to three minutes. If it somehow manages to survive, the muscles of the sperm whale will crush it. There are cases of some anacondas swallowing human children, but whenever the bodies were extracted from the belly of the snakes, they were always dead because of suffocation and constriction. Just like most stories in the Bible and the Quran, this one is also as unlikely as Muhammad's flying horse.

[The Sky as a Physical Object](#)

The sky has always been a mystery; what is this blue object over our heads that turns black at night? Unfortunately for Muhammad, there was no clear view as to the nature of the sky. Muhammad thought it was an object, so he wrote the following verse:

And if they were to see a fragment from the sky falling, they would say, '[It is merely] clouds heaped up.' (52:44)

I am surprised at the incompetence of the Muslim scholars as they could have easily twisted this verse and said Allah meant asteroids or comets by the falling sky. I hope they don't take my idea and start using it from now on. The above verse would only make sense if the author of the Quran thinks that the sky is a physical object; the Quran literally believed the sky is a giant dome or a ceiling, and above that, we have the heavens. Moreover, a falling meteor would not look like a falling cloud.

Check out this verse:

[He] who made for you the earth a bed [spread out] and the sky a ceiling. (2:22)

Or this one:

It is Allah who erected the heavens without pillars that you [can] see. (13:2)

We have already discussed the flat Earth fallacy in the first verse. It is crystal clear from the above verses that the Quran's view is that the sky is a dome resting on invisible pillars keeping it from falling on Earth and that when Allah is unhappy, he can make it fall on people.

Thoughts Come from the Heart

Throughout history, we have attributed thoughts to the heart metaphorically when we say, 'My mind says one thing, and my heart says the other.' In our everyday lives, we credit our emotional thoughts to our heart, but obviously, none of us actually believe that thoughts come from the heart instead of the brain. I could have forgiven the Quran if it wasn't speaking literally. Consider the verse below:

Unquestionably, they, the disbelievers, turn away their breasts to hide themselves from Him. Unquestionably, [even] when they cover themselves in their clothing, Allah knows what they conceal and what they declare. Indeed, He is Knowing of that within the breasts. (11:5)

I almost would not have included this verse had it not said 'disbelievers turn away their breasts' as the last part of 'He is knowing of that within the breasts'. If the first part of the verse wasn't included, we could have thought that Allah is simply saying he knows what's in your heart, but the first part totally changes the context as it says bad guys hide or turn away their breasts/chests so they can hide the evil thoughts hidden in their hearts.

Purity of Milk

Here's another terrible scientific claim that doesn't need much explanation:

And indeed, for you in grazing livestock is a lesson. We give you drink from what is in their bellies – between excretion and blood – pure milk, palatable to drinkers. (16:66)

This verse makes two incorrect scientific claims:

1. That milk in cows, goats, and camels is produced between excretion and blood in the body, i.e. near the intestines

This claim is obviously incorrect as the mammary glands required to produce milk are located nowhere near the intestines. This claim is so absurd that I did not even bother to view the counter-claims of Muslim scholars on this.

2. That milk is pure and palatable to drinkers

We know this is not true as milk is very easily contaminated with bacteria, and in the modern world, it is almost inconceivable to drink milk without pasteurisation. Moreover, a huge percentage of people are lactose intolerant, and it is definitely not advisable for them to drink milk, but obviously, Muhammad forgot to consider those people when writing the verse.

The Purpose of Animals

According to Muhammad's Quran, animals are actually created for the humans, and they all have purposes. Check out the below verse:

And [He created] the horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride and [as] adornment. And He creates that which [things] you do not know. (16:8)

I wonder why Allah created the T-Rex, Gorgonopsids, or millions of other animal species that went extinct before humans showed up. Obviously, it shows the author of the Quran didn't know about dinosaurs or other animals from the past. Interestingly, Allah hates pigs, so why create pigs? Maybe Muhammad forgot about pigs at that time, so he simply covered it with 'You do not know'.

Authenticity

Unlike Christians who, when caught or disproven by modern morals or science, turn and say those Bible verses are only metaphorical, Muslims cannot use that excuse as they claim the Quran is the literal 100 per cent word of God. Another key difference between Christians and Muslims is the level

of literacy between the two civilisations. When you are educated in science, you can see the Bible or Quran are not scientifically accurate books, so most Christians don't accept the non-scientific verses. Of course, there are fundamentalist Christians who are educated enough to know these passages are not true but indoctrinated enough to not reject them. Those are lost causes, and we can only hope that their children are not like them. The number of fundamentalist Christians is far less than that of Muslims; again, the major difference is education. The Muslim world is not as educated as the Christians or Jews. Yes, there are a lot of Muslims who are educated enough both in science and religion, but they do not change their view on the divinity of the Quran. These Muslims are simply hypocrites and too indoctrinated to let go of their childhood brainwashing. Most Muslims are actually ignorant of their own religion. Most Muslims do not know sex slavery was not only allowed but also practiced by Muhammad and his closest friends; they do not know the Quran preaches flat Earth theory and a geocentric view. These Muslims are simply ignorant, and the only way to remove ignorance is education. Just like their Christian counterparts, the educated Muslims who believe in the Quran are a lost cause, and there is nothing that can be done other than waiting for them to die out.

Muslims claim the Quran is a 100 per cent authentic book with 100 per cent of God's word without any modification or contamination from the outside world. This claim worked well early on as the moral code and scientific knowledge in Islam was still in line with the knowledge of those earlier centuries. For example, having slaves was a normal thing until the nineteenth century, or the belief that the sun orbits Earth was also a common belief until the sixteenth century. Throughout most of human history, women have been considered inferior to men as shown in the Quran, so it was never challenged. This claim of being the literal word of God is now backfiring on Islam as more and more people are asking how the creator of everything, the most intelligent being, could come up with these morally corrupt and scientifically incorrect statements.

I think the best defence for Muslims now is to claim that the Quran might

have been contaminated to some extent instead of twisting their verses to make them more compatible with the modern scientific and social world view. It would be more believable to say the Quran has some verses that may have been contaminated than to twist the verse that says Earth is flat.

Why would it be easier? Simply because the Quran left a lot of time and room for contamination. Muhammad claimed he heard voices in his head that were the words of God through the archangel Gabriel, so he would come back and narrate them to Khadijah and then to other friends. Muhammad had scribes who would write them down on cloth, leather, bone fragments, etc. These quotes or verses were all over the place. When Muhammad died in March 632 AD, there were hundreds of Muslims who had memorised the verses of the Quran. A lot of these early Muslims died in the battle of Yamama in December 632 AD, after which Abu Bakr ordered the remaining Muslims to compile the verses of the Quran in a single book under the leadership of Zayd bin Thabit.

Zayd and Umar would verify each of these verses with the memoriser, and when they agreed, they would include them in the Quran. If Zayd and Umar couldn't recall it, then two independent witnesses would have to certify the claimed verses. All these verified verses were then collated and put on a single book. This original master copy of the Quran was kept with Abu Bakr until his death in 634 AD and then passed onto the second caliph, Umar bin al-Khattab. When Umar was killed in 644 AD, this original copy was kept safe with Hafsa (the widow of Muhammad and daughter of Umar).

Muslims also claim that Allah has promised people that no one would ever be able to change or modify the Quran as the Christians and Jews did it before them. This time, Allah took the responsibility upon himself to protect his word. I wonder, why didn't he do anything to preserve earlier texts like the Bible and Torah? He must have been very short-sighted if he didn't know that Christians and Jews would contaminate his words. Uthman was the next caliph of Islam, and Islam spread very rapidly in the Middle East; there were a lot of people in these newly conquered places who were disputing the true

version of Islam. Uthman quickly understood this and asked all these newly created copies of the Quran be destroyed and replaced with the original Abu Bakr version of the Quran. How they managed to destroy every single newly created Quran is unknown; the claim that ‘we destroyed it’ is not good enough.

We all have heard of Chinese whispers and how when a word travels among multiple people, it changes its meaning. To say that the Quran created in the days of Abu Bakr was the exact replica of what Muhammad had been reciting is an extremely far-fetched claim; it simply doesn’t work. Then we have multiple copies of the Quran created in the time of Uthman that were all destroyed – every last one? Again, a very far-fetched claim. It is true that Muslims today manage to memorise the entire Quran word for word with almost zero imperfection, but that cannot be compared with the early days of the Quran’s formation as it heavily relied on a few people remembering Muhammad’s quotes. Muhammad died in 632 AD, and the Quran was compiled in 634 AD. Modern Muslims are memorising it from an established book which can constantly correct the learner if they get anything wrong, but these early Muslims had no automatic correction system. We all can create false memories easily or forget exact quotes; when we quote some of our favourite quotes, we paraphrase and still get the meaning across, but they are not the exact words of the original narrator. There is no reason to believe that these early Muslims who recalled the verses of the Quran got everything exactly as Muhammad had uttered them.

Incorrect Verses

There is another major anomaly regarding the authenticity of the Quran. According to Ibn Ishaq, there was a verse that was supposed to fit between verses 20 and 21 in chapter 53. This verse is often referred to as the ‘Satanic Verse’. According to Ishaq, this was later removed by Muhammad as he said Satan tricked him into believing it was from Allah. Points to be noted are the following:

1. If Muhammad was tricked this time, how do we know he wasn’t

tricked in other instances?

2. If Muhammad was indeed tricked, then obviously, he is not a perfect human as he can be tricked by Satan as well.

Modern Muslim scholars claim this incident never occurred, but they are okay with other evidence from Ishaq that paints Muhammad in a good light.

Lost Verses

According to Aisha, there was a Quranic verse about the stoning of an adulterer which was lost as it was written on paper that ended up being eaten by a goat.

The verse of stoning and of suckling an adult ten times was revealed, and they were [written] on a paper and kept under my pillow. When the Messenger of Allah [PBUH] expired and we were occupied by his death, a goat entered and ate away the paper.⁷¹

These lost verses make perfect sense as they are in line with Muhammad's thinking process. There are various hadiths that say how Muhammad preferred stoning as a method of punishment for an adulterer, and so it is understandable for it to be in the Quran. All the adulterers in the Muslim world should thank this goat because if it weren't for this noble goat, all Muslims would have agreed on this barbaric punishment of adultery.

This second one is an abrogated verse, and it would have been a very twisted verse had it survived and would have been an even a bigger source of embarrassment for the Muslims. According to Muhammad, anyone who has been breastfed at least ten times by a woman becomes a blood relative to her (like a son) and therefore can't marry her later in life, but he can be in her presence when there is no one else around, like a mother and a son. This was one way of making people blood relatives, which was later changed to five times instead of ten. So far, so good? Well, then comes this hadith:

A'isha (Allah be pleased with her) reported that Salim, the freed slave of Abu Hadhaifa, lived with him and his family in their house.

She [i.e. the daughter of Suhail] came to Allah's Apostle (Peace be upon him) and said, 'Salim has attained [puberty] as men attain, and he understands what they understand, and he enters our house freely. I, however, perceive that something [rankles] in the heart of Abu Hudhaifa,' whereupon Allah's Apostle (Peace be upon him) said to her 'Suckle him, and you would become unlawful for him, and [the rankling] which Abu Hudhaifa feels in his heart will disappear.' She returned and said, 'So I suckled him, and what [was there] in the heart of Abu Hudhaifa disappeared.' (Sahih Muslim Book 8, no. 3425)

Some Muslim scholars say that the woman basically extracted the milk through lactation into a cup, which he then drank. Whether that was the case or not, we can see the sense of humour of Muhammad. When the woman questioned how she could breastfeed a grown man, instead of instructing the woman to put it in a cup, Muhammad simply smiled and said, 'Yes, I know.'

On a side note, this actually shows how enslaving religions can be as for a woman to be in the presence of a male, she has to make him drink her milk. What happened to just acting like adults and being in the presence of one another without any sexual encounters? Islam sees men and women as mindless animals that are always looking to have sex with each other.

Modification of the Quran

These lost verses can be somewhat disputed by Muslim scholars, so there is not much we can do other than sticking to our guns and educating the Muslims who don't know about them. The last major anomaly is what we know as the 'abrogation of verses' or *naskh* in Arabic. The mere fact that Muslims have decided to abrogate certain verses means these verses were contradictory, and that can't be a surprise; after all, the Quran was collected from the memories of people, and newly conquered people had also created their own versions of the Quran, so it would have been easy to accidentally

include invented verses. The abrogation principle is adopted on the basis of the following Quranic verse:

We do not abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten except that We bring forth [one] better than it or similar to it. Do you not know that Allah is over all things competent? (2:106)

So basically, the creator of billions of galaxies can't come up with a sentence that is perfect the first time, so he has to come up with something better the second time around. Either way, this is the principle adopted by Muslim scholars to remove contradictions from the Quran as there are instances where it says one thing and then quite another in a later verse. Based on this, Muslim scholars decided to keep the later verses over the earlier verses. According to Burton in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and the book *Islamic Theories of Abrogation*, 564 verses were alleged to have been expunged from the *mushaf* (Quran) or one eleventh of its total content ⁷². As Islam modernises, expect to have more verses abrogated.

Violence

Muslim apologists love to claim that most of these violent verses were talking about certain contexts for a specific time. When analysing the violent verses of Islam, it is important to break down the history of Muhammad's life. The Quran was revealed to Muhammad in the last twenty-three years of his life, and there were two major significant events in those twenty-three years. Since we are using our critical sense in assessing the Quran, it is more likely that it is the word of Muhammad, so any verses quoted in this chapter are considered to have come from Muhammad instead of Allah unless otherwise mentioned.

The Quran is not compiled in chronological order, so it is important to break it down into its two parts:

1. Quranic verses before the migration to Medina, called Meccan verses
2. Quranic verses after the migration to Medina, called Medinan verses

Meccan Verses

Most gentle and nice verses in the Quran come from the period before Muhammad's migration to Medina. They were more philosophical and less practical in nature. Muhammad preached his version of good: 'come to God', 'look after other people', etc. All these verses came when Muhammad did not have any power and was not a significant force. Threats in these verses are actually from Allah and are not direct commandments of Jihad yet. During this time, Muhammad was starting up a new religion, and he had a new message of a single God which Arabs of the time didn't believe in. Muhammad was ridiculed and insulted on a daily basis. Check out some of these verses before the migration:

Does he not know that Allah sees? No! If he does not desist, We will surely drag him by the forelock. (96:14–15)

As you can see, there is a supposed punishment from God, but Muhammad is not physically forcing any punishment because he is not in power and so threatening unbelievers (by 'he', Allah means the man who is stopping Muhammad from praying) with the wrath of God. The people of Makkah would encourage Muhammad to stop preaching this newly formed religion, but his ambition to start a new religion didn't dwindle.

They wish that you would soften [in your position] so they would soften [toward you]. (68:9)

Muhammad was telling them old stories from the Bible and Torah, so instead of giving them any evidence, he would make up verses like these:

When Our verses are recited to him, he says, 'Legends of the former peoples.' (68:15)

Of course, no effective religion works without hellfire and some sort of divine punishment, so Muhammad would threaten them with eternal punishment but was in no position to carry out these punishments himself. In fact, he would actually avoid getting in any physical altercation with them:

And be patient over what they say and avoid them with gracious avoidance. (73:10)

Instead, Muhammad is telling people not to get involved with the disbelievers; Allah will deal with them. Check out these verses:

So leave Me, [O Muhammad], with [the matter of] whoever denies the Quran. We will progressively lead them [to punishment] from where they do not know. (68:44)

And leave Me with [the matter of] the deniers, those of ease [in life], and allow them respite a little. (73:11)

Indeed, with Us [for them] are shackles and burning fire. (73:12)

There are tens of verses where Muhammad threatens the disbelievers with divine punishment but no direct command from Allah for Jihad. Most of the ‘scientific verses’ also came during this period as the first part of Muhammad’s prophetic life was spent convincing people of his divine knowledge and personal brilliance.

In 619 AD, Muhammad’s powerful uncle, Abu Talib, and his wife, Khadijah, died. With their deaths, Muhammad lost the protection and was now in physical danger from the powerful pagan Quraish tribe. Muhammad briefly went to Ta’if in search of a safe haven; however, he wasn’t welcome there either and was stoned in the streets. Muhammad came back to Mecca and then eventually decided to immigrate to Yathrib (later known as Medina). Almost all the Muslims managed to migrate to Medina in 622 AD.

[Medinan Verses](#)

Medina had a population of Christians and Jews who were more concerned with the pagans of Mecca than this new self-proclaimed prophet, so they allowed Muhammad to come to Medina. Muhammad was made aware of a plot to assassinate him, so he slipped out of Mecca in the middle of a night, along with Abu Bakr. Below is an interesting story on the escape of

Muhammad:

Quraysh met together one night in Makkah. Some of them said, 'When morning comes, imprison him in chains – meaning the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).' Some said, 'No, kill him'; and others said, 'No, drive him out.' Allah informed His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) of that, so 'Ali slept in the bed of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that night, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went out and hid in the cave. The *mushrikoon* [pagans] spent the night lying in wait for 'Ali, thinking that he was the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). When morning came, they pounced on him, and when they saw 'Ali, Allah thwarted their plot. They said, 'Where is that friend of yours?' He said, 'I do not know.' So they set out after him, and when they reached the mountain, they were confounded. They climbed up the mountain and passed by the cave and saw a spider's web over its entrance. They said, 'If anyone had entered here, the spider would not have spun a web over the entrance.' And he stayed there for three nights.

Muhammad was made to run from his own city in the middle of a night like a thief, and this was not going to go down well. It probably motivated Muhammad more than ever to make his religion successful and then come back to conquer Makkah. In June 622 AD, Muhammad successfully entered Medina along with almost all the Muslims. Once the Muslims were gone, the people of Makkah took over the properties of the Muslims, which was a good enough reason for Muhammad to wage a war on them. Once out of the grasp of the Makkans, jihadi verses started coming to Muhammad.

Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory. [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right – only because they say, 'Our Lord is Allah.' And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of

others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned. And Allah will surely support those who support Him. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might. (22:39–40)

Notice how this verse is actually not critical of Jews and Christians as Muhammad is appeasing them by saying the Makkan pagans would have destroyed the churches and synagogues because they had Allah's name in them. Obviously, the Jews and Christians didn't agree with that claim; however, they saw the common enemy in the pagans of Makkah. All the following violent verses actually came when Muhammad was in Medina and was growing in power. Now Muhammad's influence is growing, so it is the time to fight and expand.

Say [O Muhammad], 'If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have obtained, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and jihad in His cause, then wait until Allah executes His command. And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.' (9:24)

This verse is simply putting the idea of the love of Allah above everything else, such as fathers, brothers, or wives etc. Allah and jihad must come before everything, and it is the only thing that would save them on Judgement Day from hellfire.

Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture – [fight] until they give the *jizyah* willingly while they are humbled. (9:29)

This verse was specifically about the Jews and Christians who claim to believe in Allah but are not really Muslims as they actually believe in Yahweh. This verse is isolating and separating them and showing they are no

longer friends. Here, the Quran is ordering Muslims to fight them until they are humbled, meaning they accept Muslim rule and live like second-class *jizyah*-paying citizens. The common narrative given by Al-Tabari is that when Muhammad sent his ambassador to the Byzantine emperor, he beheaded him. In response to this murder of the ambassador, this verse came in. Ibn Kathir describes the context of this *ayah* a little differently.

This honourable *ayah* was revealed with the order to fight the People of the Book. After the pagans were defeated, the people entered Allah's religion in large numbers, and the Arabian Peninsula was secured under the Muslims' control. Allah commanded His Messenger to fight the People of the Scriptures, Jews and Christians, on the ninth year of Hijrah, and he prepared his army to fight the Romans and called the people to Jihad, announcing his intent and destination. The Messenger sent his intent to various Arab areas around Al-Madinah to gather forces, and he collected an army of thirty thousand. Some people from Al-Madinah and some hypocrites, in and around it, lagged behind, for that year was a year of drought and intense heat. The Messenger of Allah marched, heading towards Ash-Sham to fight the Romans until he reached Tabuk, where he set camp for about twenty days next to its water resources. He then prayed to Allah for a decision and went back to Al-Madinah because it was a hard year and the people were weak, as we will mention, Allah willing [125](#).

If we take Al-Tabari's version, then the question is, what was in the letter that was so offensive that the Byzantium emperor decided to kill the ambassador? If we take Ibn-Kathir's version, then it makes sense; the verse came in, Muhammad sent the ambassador indicating his intent, and hence, he reacted. Below is the translation of the letter:

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

From Muhammad, son of Abdullah, to Heraclius, the Leader of the Romans:

Peace be upon he who follows the guidance.

Furthermore, I invite you with the invitation of Islam. If you accept Islam, you will find peace. Allah will give your reward in double. If you turn away, you will bear the sin of the Arians.

Say, ‘O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you – that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah.’ But if they turn away, then say, ‘Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him].’ (3:64 ¹²⁶)

Heraclius viewed this as a threat and obviously took offence to it. Muhammad decided to attack Byzantium Empire either before or after this verse became redundant. **In light of various other letters that Muhammad wrote to other heads of states, it is evident Muhammad was asking all of them to come to Islam or bear consequences. Obviously, this was being viewed as a threat of war.** If you look at the verse before and after, it all makes sense. This is what the preceding verse says.

O you who have believed, indeed, the polytheists are unclean, so let them not approach al-Masjid al-Haram after this, their [final] year. And if you fear privation, Allah will enrich you from His bounty if He wills. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Wise. (9:28)

According to Ibn Kathir, once Muhammad applied this verse and banned the non-Muslims from entering the Masjid Al-Haram, Muslims suffered a lot of revenue loss in tributes from non-Muslims. To compensate Muslims, Allah gave another verse to Muslims ordering them to fight the Jews and Christians and extract *jizyah* from them. The verse after 9:29 says,

The Jews say, ‘Ezra is the son of Allah’; and the Christians say, ‘The Messiah is the son of Allah.’ That is their statement from their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved [before them]. May Allah destroy them; how are they deluded? (9:30)

Allah is now justifying how evil these Jews and Christians are, justifying the fight against them, hence verse 9:29, asking Muslims to fight the Jews and Christians.

In 628 AD, Muhammad wanted to go to Makkah and perform a pilgrimage (umrah) in Kaaba; however, the pagans of Makkah refused. After much negotiation, both sides managed to sign a peace treaty called the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. This treaty clearly stipulated,

And if a Quraishite comes without the permission of his guardian to Muhammad,

meaning if a Quraishi accepts Islam and goes to Muhammad without the permission of their guardian, they will be returned to Quraish. Later on, a Quraishi woman, Umm Khulthum bint Uqba, accepted Islam and ran to Muhammad in Medina. When her brothers demanded her back, Muhammad refused and conveniently got this verse:

O you who have believed, when the believing women come to you as emigrants, examine them. Allah is most knowing as to their faith. And if you know them to be believers, then do not return them to the disbelievers; they are not lawful [wives] for them, nor are they lawful [husbands] for them. But give the disbelievers what they have spent. (60:10)

Basically, Allah is now saying that if she is a believing woman, don't return her to her guardian, thus violating the agreement. Muhammad refused ⁶⁹ to return Umm Khulthum, offering to pay the dowry her husband had paid for her wedding. I must add that not returning Umm Khulthum was actually the right thing to do as she should have been free to go wherever she wanted to, but this was clearly a violation of the agreement that Muhammad made. As always, Muhammad made the treaty with them for his benefit and broke it when it suited him. In popular culture, Muslims believe that the Quraish broke the treaty when, in fact, it was Muhammad. Muslim apologists claim that the treaty had already been broken as one of

Quraish's allied tribes, Banu Bakr, attacked a Muslim tribe of Banu Khuza'a. This is a terrible justification as the treaty was with the Quraish, not the neighbouring polytheist tribes. Muslims knew it was a difficult predicament, and this justification would not be enough to break a treaty, so they asked for divine revelation. As always, Muhammad conveniently got this verse:

And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give *zakah*, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. (9:5)

After the incident of Umm Khulthum, the Quraishis weren't happy. Muslims also claimed that the treaty had been broken by the Quraishis as their allied tribe had attacked a Muslim tribe. Either way, Muhammad gave the Quraishis four months, and then said they would have a war.

In this verse, Muhammad claims that Allah is telling him to wait until the sacred months have passed and then to 'kill the polytheists wherever you find them'. Allah has made an exception for those who weren't aware of the breaking of the treaty. Critics of Islam deliberately take this verse out of context and make it out to be a licence issued by the Ministry of Allah to kill the infidels, but the reality is a little different. However, Muhammad should be given some blame for the violation of the treaty by refusing to return Umm Khulthum.

Muhammad was a very charismatic man, and realising that Islam was flourishing, he knew it would be in his best interest for the treaty to break down. There were no subsequent efforts to make any more treaties. In our modern world, when negotiations fall apart, all efforts are made to negotiate and rediscuss everything instead of starting a war. Let's look at some other verses:

Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you but do not transgress, for Allah does not love transgressors. (2:190)

This verse is not over any specific incident and is instead a general command from Allah to fight your enemies. Islamic studies.org. [70](#) commentaries admit that when Muslims were weak, they were told to be patient and just preach, but now that they had a small state in Medina, it was okay to spread the word of Allah. How can anyone blame ISIS or the Taliban for interpreting these verses as God's instruction for conquest? As a result of this verse, the battle of Badr was fought, and the Muslims were victorious.

In January 624 AD, Muhammad dispatched a group of eight men to Nakhlah on the outskirts of Makkah, led by Abdullah bin Jahsh, to obtain intelligence on the Quraish. This resulted in a death of one of the Quraishi man in the month of Rajab, a sacred month in which fighting is prohibited. Muhammad first admitted that Muslims should not have carried out the raid, and he refused to take the prisoners and the spoils of war, until he got another revelation from Allah. Allah, as always, was there to get Muhammad out of this pickle and gave him the below verse:

They ask you about the sacred month – about fighting therein. Say, 'Fighting therein is great [sin], but averting [people] from the way of Allah and disbelief in Him and [preventing access to] al-Masjid al-Haram and the expulsion of its people therefrom are greater [evil] in the sight of Allah. And fitna is greater than killing.' And they will continue to fight you until they turn you back from your religion if they are able. And whoever of you reverts from his religion [to disbelief] and dies while he is a disbeliever – for those, their deeds have become worthless in this world and the Hereafter, and those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally. (2:217)

This verse clearly shows a human element in it. Muhammad was told that maybe they shouldn't have conducted this raid that resulted in the death of a man in a sacred month. Instead of making a truce, Muhammad went on and said that Allah said it was all okay. Notice this part of the verse:

And they will continue to fight you until they turn you back from your religion if they are able.

Muhammad has totally turned the blame and shown how important it is to keep fighting these people as if you don't, they will fight you. This is again a clear indication that by this time, Muhammad was hell-bent on continuing to attack the pagans until they were gone. This was a time of expansion for Islam; the battle of Badr cannot be perceived as a defensive battle. After the full verse above, Muhammad took prisoners from the raid. There is another verse conveniently 'revealed' to Muhammad before the battle of Badr:

So when you meet those who disbelieve [in battle], strike [their] necks until you have inflicted slaughter upon them; then secure their bonds and either [confer] favour afterwards or ransom [them] until the war lays down its burdens. That [is the command]. And if Allah had willed, He could have taken vengeance upon them [Himself], but [He ordered armed struggle] to test some of you by means of others. And those who are killed in the cause of Allah – never will He waste their deeds. (47:4)

Obviously, Muslims will say that Allah is instructing you in what to do when your battle starts with the infidels, like any general would. Sure, no general would tell his soldiers *not* to kill the enemy, but a general is not going to win a Nobel Peace Prize either; when a battle starts, they will fight. We have seen how this war with the 'infidels' could have been avoided and how it was Muhammad who actually violated the treaty.

Strange how all these revelations turn out in favour of Muhammad, whether it's him marrying his daughter-in-law or winning a battle. Shortly after that, Muhammad fought the battle of Badr and won it comprehensively.

Kill them whenever you confront them and drive them out from where they drove you out. [For though killing is sinful] wrongful fitna is even worse than killing. Do not fight against them near the Holy Mosque unless they fight against you; but if they fight against

you, kill them, for that is the reward of such unbelievers. (2:191)

According to *tafsir* Al-Jalalayn, this verse came after Muhammad had conquered Makkah. The Muslims had won Makkah without any significant resistance from the people of Makkah. Muhammad is saying worshipping idols is worse than killing, so kill the idol worshipers. Notice the word *wrongful* before *fitna* (unrest), meaning that unrest can be right in some cases. I wonder what would be the right unrest. Obviously, it means that if there is a disbeliever or someone who is spreading disbelief/unrest amongst Muslims, persecuting those people would not be wrongful. But if someone is persecuting Muslims, then you should take up arms and kill them if you have to.

The people of Quraish were forced to believe in Muhammad's word and his religion. Yes, Muhammad had to leave Makkah under duress, but that didn't mean that Muhammad could come back and take the city over by force. This is like how I cannot go back to Pakistan now, but if I somehow raise a strong army, I should be able to go back and take over the country by force and either convert everyone to atheism or make them live under my rule as second-class citizens. This is exactly what Muhammad did. The moment he got power, he went back to his city of birth, conquered it, broke all the idols from the Kabah, and established his religion.

Although I am going to discuss that in a little more detail, it is important for me to discuss a favourite verse of Muslim apologists:

There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. (2:256)

It is true that in this verse, Allah is telling people there is no compulsion in religion, but things are not all hunky-dory afterwards. This verse was in the context of people who are subjects of Islamic rule and are paying the *jizyah*. In other words, they are already second-class citizens. Countries like Pakistan use this verse to make sure non-Muslims identify themselves as non-Muslims on their national identification cards, resulting in institutionalised discrimination. Muslims only have a choice to force or not force religion on

non-Muslims when they have non-Muslims under their thumb. The discrimination that stems from the treatment of these second-class citizens is enough to make some non-Muslims become Muslims.

CHAPTER 8

Islamophobia

You might have heard this term casually thrown around by apologists and these so-called left-wing liberals. First, let's look at what *phobia* means.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a phobia is 'an extreme or irrational fear of or aversion to something'. This means any fear that has irrational reasons behind it. For example, you can be an ophidiophobe and have an irrational fear of snakes. You live in the cities where you are highly unlikely to see a snake, yet you are always afraid of them and thinking about those creeps slithering all over you when you are sleeping. You can be an ophidiophobe living in New Zealand, a country with no snakes. You can walk in the parks, mountains, or streets, and you will never see a snake, yet you are terribly concerned about being bitten by one. Now that is an irrational fear.

I live in Australia, where there are quite a lot of snakes, yet I have never seen one outside of a zoo, and since I am not an ophidiophobe, I live my life without worrying about a snake biting me. This does not mean I won't be afraid of one if I see one coming towards me. If I am walking in the bush and I encounter a snake, should I just keep walking towards the snake or even poke it with my hands? That would be absolutely stupid because the snake will bite me, and I *should* fear its bite, but that would be a perfectly rational reason not to poke it. I should be afraid of the snake, but fearing snakes is not as same as being an ophidiophobe.

Now let's talk about Islamophobia. By definition, it means having an irrational fear of Islam. The moment you criticise Islam, you are automatically labelled an Islamophobe. One of the admins of my Facebook page is a woman. Any woman should be afraid of Islam as it encourages the beating of disobedient wives at the hands of their husbands as discussed

earlier. Now fearing this particular teaching of Islam is not irrational. Would you want to be beaten by your spouse? I am guessing any sane person would say, 'No!' so you have to criticise the ideology that condones it. This doesn't make you a phobe; it makes you legitimately and reasonably afraid of this ideology.

To make matters worse, from the Islamic point of view, CV, the admin of my page, is also a homosexual. Homosexuality is a terrible sin in Islam, and if the person doesn't change, they should be killed. Should she be afraid of Islam? After all, this ideology wants her dead. Can anyone explain to me how her fear of Islam is irrational? I don't think anyone can, so she is not an Islamophobe.

If she had not been born in a Muslim country to Muslim parents, she would not be afraid of revealing her identity on the Internet. Her fear of Islam is perfectly rational, and even though she lives in a Western country, she is still afraid of Islamists who would label her a sinful, atheist, homosexual ex-Muslim woman and might try to kill her.

I am a Pakistani ex-Muslim living in Australia. I am also afraid of Islam because it promotes the killing of apostates no matter where they are. In my debate at the University of New South Wales in 2018, Hizb ut-Tahrir spokesman Uthman Badar said according to Islamic teachings, apostates like me should be killed; any one of his followers could one day knock on my door and try to kill me. Now I am afraid of Islam; is this rational or irrational?

The fear of Islam is real, and any sane person should be afraid of it and its teachings. *Islamophobia*, on the other hand, is a phony term and has no basis whatsoever. Calling someone an Islamophobe is simply fatuous. If I simply say I don't like R 'n' B music because it may have some violent lyrics, then by this logic, I should be an R-'n'-B-phobe or a footballophobe if I just don't like football.

Now let's look in detail as to why non-Muslims are afraid of Islam. As

discussed earlier, the Quran has very violent attitudes towards non-Muslims. I am happy to acknowledge that most Muslims don't follow those violent verses in their day-to-day lives; however, there are still a huge number of people who take every word of the Quran literally, including the violent verses.

We can divide Muslims in four categories:

1. Jihadis
2. Islamists
3. Carefree
4. Seculars

Jihadis: These are the Muslims non-Muslims should be most afraid of as they not only believe in the violent verses but also are willing to act upon them. Common examples are ISIS or the Taliban.

Islamists: These are also fundamentalists who believe in every word of the Quran literally but do not actively take part in the actions required to spread Islam. Common examples are Linda Sarsour and Hizb ut-Tahrir. If given the opportunity, they would take over the non-Muslim world in a heartbeat. They are generally sympathetic towards ISIS and the Taliban.

Carefree: These are everyday Muslims who form the majority of the Muslim population and are the most confused. They know some basics of Islam, mostly the good bits, and are generally ignorant of the bad bits from the hadiths and the Quran. They are aware of the basic moral codes, i.e. don't consume alcohol or eat bacon; however, they are unaware of Muhammad's violent beheadings of his opponents and his hyperactive sex life. These Muslims are basically cultural Muslims who are only Muslims because they were born in Muslim households. These Muslims also don't like to indulge in religious debates as they simply don't care about the barbaric teachings of Islam as long as they have no direct impact on them. Common examples are your next-door neighbour who sometimes goes out and parties yet believes homosexuals are sinners in the eyes of Allah.

Seculars: Yes, there are secularists in the Islamic world as well. These Muslims are well educated and well aware of the problems of the Quran and the life of Muhammad, yet they still remain Muslims either because of a desire to bring change from within or for the sake of their safety. Either way, they are very, very small in number and need the most support from their Western counterparts. Some examples are Majid Nawaz, Pervez Hoodbhoy, and the late Asma Jahangir.

Most human societies have some people on the right and some people on the left, while the majority sit in the centre. One of the biggest problems in the Muslim world is that the balance between the extreme right and extreme left is terribly uneven. Not only is the number of people on the extreme right higher, but they are also violent, while the Muslim extreme left is not only smaller but also usually intellectuals without teeth and claws.

Let's look at some of the numbers that clearly demonstrate the ignorance of Islam in the Islamic world. According to the Pew Research Centre (a survey conducted in 2013), 84 per cent of Pakistanis believe Sharia should be the law of the country. However, Islamist parties in Pakistan regularly make up only 5 to 7 per cent of Parliament. This is mainly because the Pakistanis who want Sharia to be implemented have their own utopian view of it. When they see Islamist parties explaining Sharia law, they run away and don't vote for them, clearly demonstrating their lack of Sharia knowledge.

Now let's look at the numbers according to a Pew poll conducted in 2013 ¹¹⁷ and 2015 ⁷⁶. The 2013 survey shows the favour/disfavour towards Sharia, and the 2015 survey shows favour/disfavour towards ISIS. According to these polls, 84 per cent of the Pakistanis want Sharia law, yet they only give 5 to 7 per cent representation to the Sharia law imposers in the Parliament. Moreover, only 9 per cent of Pakistanis support ISIS. The same poll shows 72 per cent of Indonesians want Sharia law, while only 4 per cent support ISIS. Eighty-six per cent of Malaysians want Sharia law; however, only 11 per cent support ISIS. This contradiction between Sharia and ISIS is more or less quite consistent across various Muslim societies.

According to a Pew poll in 2015, 28 per cent of Pakistanis view ISIS negatively, 9 per cent positively, while 62 per cent don't know whether ISIS is a reflection of true Islam or not. Pakistan is least affected by ISIS, so the majority is not concerned about them; they are more concerned about the Taliban, the slightly less extremist version of ISIS. According to a different Pew survey [77](#), 72 per cent of Pakistanis view the Taliban negatively, and only 6 per cent view them favourably. These 72 per cent certainly don't want the Taliban ruling their country; they are clearly unaware of the true relationship between the Taliban and Sharia law (which 84 per cent of the country say they support). The Taliban are actually significantly less violent than Muhammad's Islam as they do not always stone adulterers; they only shoot them in the head. Unlike Muhammad, they don't take slaves or sex slaves, yet Pakistanis view the Taliban as evil, while Muhammad is the greatest man to have ever lived. ISIS is a truer reflection of Sharia law. ISIS is doing exactly what Muhammad was doing 1,400 years ago; they attack neighbouring towns and are actively continuing the struggle to create a true Islamic state. They behead their opponents, kill adulterers and homosexuals, take slaves and sex slaves, etc.

If you want Sharia in your country, then you have to have an ISIS type of government, yet they don't want ISIS. All the examples mentioned above clearly show most Muslims are either unaware of Islam or totally incapable of drawing a picture of Sharia law in the true world. This is why a significantly higher percentage of these Muslims want Sharia law, but when it comes to having a government that imposes it, they run away. These examples are also an evidence of how most Muslims are actually carefree; they have been told Sharia is good, so they naively believe in it, but when a true example of Sharia is shown to them, they don't want it.

Although *Islamophobia* is a bogus term, Muslimophobia might be a real fact. I might get in trouble with my fellow atheists with this statement, but if you look closely, it does have merit. As seen in the two examples above, we can conclude most Muslims do not follow their own ideology, making them bad Muslims but good humans. You can rationally fear Islam, but you shouldn't

fear all Muslims. Islam is an ideology given to us by Muhammad, so it can easily be either accepted or rejected. Muslims are a group of people who believe in different versions of Islam and are, by nature, complicated; we cannot generalise a group of people. It is perfectly rational to fear the Jihadis and Islamists, but how can we see the carefree Muslims in the same light? These carefree Muslims contribute towards music, literature, art, sport, and other parts of human society, so how can we fear them?

I am of the view that those who adopt Islam in its truest form should be monitored closely, and Western democracies should avoid allowing them in their countries. At the same time, immigration must not be banned for all Muslims. My immediate Muslim friends and family are perfect examples to support this claim. My sister falls into the category of a carefree Muslim who immigrated to Australia. She is a valuable addition to the Australian community as she has a good job, pays her taxes, and respects Australian law. I have tons of friends who are carefree Muslims, and they are a valuable part of Australia. If we followed Pauline Hanson's or Trump's methodology, we would never have had these Muslims here.

So why should the non-Muslim world, especially the West, be concerned about Muslims? Western Europe is clearly going through a major dilemma at the moment and seems to have lost their way when it comes to Muslim immigration. The problem they have is not knowing where to draw the line. I am sure they are aware of the problems faced by Germany and Sweden after the massive influx of Muslim refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, but the bigger question is what to do. The right suggests banning all Muslim migration, whether legal or illegal, but on the other hand, the left says we cannot shut the doors on those who seek our help.

Generally, I am on the left; however I am also not willing to close my eyes to everything that comes with it. You cannot ignore the risk of Muslim migration into the West without some costs. Yes, we are aware that most Muslims are not followers of Muhammad's true Islam, nor do they actually understand what Sharia law is, but that doesn't mean that every Muslim

refugee entering the West is that carefree or ignorant. Of the migrants arriving in Europe by sea in 2015, 58 per cent were adult males over 18 years of age, 17 per cent were adult females over 18, and 25 per cent were minors [73](#). There have been concerns raised that a huge number of Islamists or even Jihadis have entered Europe under the guise of refugees. There is absolutely no doubt that crimes have gone up in the areas where these refugees have been settled, mainly in the Swedish city of Malmö and in Germany.

According to the Federal Criminal Police Office [118](#), in 2013, migrants (*zuwanderer*) committed 599 sex crimes or an average of two a day. In 2014, migrants committed 949 sex crimes or around three per day. In 2015, migrants committed 1,683 sex crimes or around five per day. During the first three quarters of 2016, migrants committed 2,790 sex crimes or around ten per day. In fact, the actual number of migrant-related sex crimes in Germany is at least two or three times higher than the official number; for example, only 10 per cent of the sex crimes committed in Germany appear in the official statistics, according to André Schulz, head of the Criminal Police Association (*Bund Deutscher Kriminalbeamter/BDK*).

According to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ), 77 per cent of the rapes that occurred in Sweden in 2010 were perpetrated by people from Islamic countries. These Muslims only represent 2 per cent of the Swedish population [74](#). Let that sink in for a moment; 77 per cent of the crime (rape) was carried out by Muslims who make up only 2 per cent of the population. Clearly, there is something wrong in the minds of that 2 per cent. Now the perpetrators of these sexual assaults give different reasons, and relating this behaviour of Muslim refugees with their religion is definitely not fair; however, why should the West jeopardise the safety of its citizens? The picture is not rosy anywhere else in Europe either. Let us take a look at the prison demographics across Europe.

One Muslim from Pakistan, Muhammad Asif, justified his sexual assault on a German woman by saying, ‘As a refugee, it is hard to find a girlfriend [73](#).’ Obviously, this guy did not justify his sexual assault by saying Muhammad

had sex slaves, so clearly, the justification was not his religion. In fact, rape in Pakistani society is considered very un-Islamic. It is also true some of the perpetrators of these sexual assaults have justified their actions on religious grounds with reasons such as ‘A woman not dressed moderately is asking for it’. This view is usually justified by the following verse:

O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful. (33:59)

This verse is basically telling the believing women to cover up so they are not mistaken for non-believing women and subsequently abused. It can also be interpreted as saying that whether you believe or not, if you are uncovered, you can be abused.

Leftists and Muslim apologists can twist this fact any way they like, but the relationship between Muslim refugees and their tendency to rape Western women cannot be ignored. Whatever the reasons may be, the reality is that rape is a problem in the incoming Muslim population. It is about time that Western Europe starts recognising this problem and stops accepting every Muslim man that poses as a refugee. The crimes of the Muslim men are not limited to rape only. Let’s take a look at the overall prison population of some of the European countries.

Country	Prison Percentage	Population Percentage
Belgium 119	35%	5.2%
United Kingdom 120	14.4%	4.4%
Denmark 121	20%	0.5%
France 122	60%	5.6%

As I mentioned at the start of this chapter, *Islamophobia* is a bogus term;

however, we should not be Muslimophobic. Most Muslims are not fundamentalists and should be able to immigrate to Western countries on the basis of their skills. Skilled migration should remain open; however, refugee intake should be carefully monitored as we do not know how many fundamentalists are posing as refugees.

So the next time anyone calls you an Islamophobe, you can shut them down very simply by saying, 'This ideology promotes violence against homosexuals, apostates, and women. This is why I criticise it. This makes me afraid of Islam, not an Islamophobe. I am, however, not a Muslimophobe as I have no problem with carefree Muslims coming into our country.'

When Muslims come to the West, they see it's perfectly okay to be gay, give equal rights to women, or have some religious freedom, so we are seeing previously unheard voices from these people. When these people (gays, apostates, or women) become vocal, they openly clash with the Islamic establishment in these Western countries. Some people whom we thought were on the left, such as Sam Harris or Douglas Murray, have stood up for this vocal minority within the Muslim minority, only to be rejected by the 'extreme left' and even labelled as racists or Islamophobes. Anyone who listens to Douglas Murray or Sam Harris can clearly see these people are not racists; they are simply relaying verified statistics about the Muslim population to help support the vocal minority, yet the left continues attacking them. I actually belong to this minority within a minority. I am an apostate, and I cannot go to certain suburbs with a high Muslim population out of fear of physical violence. Australia's very own 'Imam of Peace', Imam Tawhidi, who is a vocal critic of the fundamentalist Islam and is trying to modernise Islam, was publicly spat at and abused in front of Channel 7 news team in the suburbs of Sydney. This is an imam who is still at least a Muslim; can you imagine what can happen to an openly apostate ex-Muslim? Instead of the support from the left, when we criticise Islam, all we get are comments like 'Islamophobe' or accusations of being a bigot from the extreme left. If you have a minority that is deliberately bigoted against a smaller minority, whose side should the left be on? Ben Affleck is a clear example of this ignorance;

when Sam Harris pointed out facts about homophobia and misogyny in Muslim communities, instead of supporting the homosexuals of the Islamic world, Ben Affleck attacked Sam Harris and called him an Islamophobe. He didn't even try to counter the argument; he just resorted to name-calling.

When it comes to non-Muslims, the left stands with homosexuals or people seeking freedom from religious persecution, racism, etc., but the moment these voices come from the Muslim community, they pull back their support. The left has clearly lost its way; Majid Nawaz calls them the 'regressive left' because of their contradictory position on minorities. One of the worst side effects of this failure is the rise of right-wing politics in the West. Ten years ago, no one could have predicted the U.S. population would support a president like Donald Trump. Trump has been caught lying, insulting war veterans and minorities, and making misogynistic comments, but people are so fed up with the 'sucking-up' politics of the left that they have put someone like Donald Trump in the office.

Trump is not the only example of the rise of right-wing politics; there is also Pauline Hanson in Australia, Geert Wilders in Holland, the Alternate for Germany in Germany (the party is only 5 years old), the Sweden Democrats in Sweden, etc. After France, Germany and Sweden are the countries most affected by the rising Muslim population, hence the sudden shift in the structure of their voters. It baffles me why the French are not waking up to this impending doom. Britain is also starting to see the rise of some right-wing nationalist parties like Britain First, and while it is not affecting the status quo yet, I wouldn't be surprised if they become a major force in the next couple of years.

Obviously, I am not a supporter of the above-mentioned political parties or their leaders, but the only way to stop the rise of the right is to get the left to wake up.

CHAPTER 9

How to Debate with a Muslim Apologist

When debating with a Muslim, you can see they base the defence of their belief around three types of claims:

1. Claims absent of reason (i.e. miracles)
2. Claims that have some reason, but you can argue whether they are good reasons or not (i.e. chopping the hands of thieves, beheading murders, etc.)
3. Claims that may seem reasonable; however, they are totally unfalsifiable, such as the ‘God claim’

1. Claims Absent of Reason

This is the weakest defence religious apologists use, which is easy for an atheist to attack and very difficult for an apologist to defend. All religions come with some sort of miracle story; i.e. Muhammad flew on a horse, or Jesus’ resurrection. We know that this is simply not possible because of the laws of physics. We know horses don’t and can’t fly with their anatomical structure. We know once you die, you don’t come to life again. This is by far the best tool that you, as an atheist debater, have against the unreasonable theist. Most humans tend to be reasonable but find a way to turn it off. For example, when a theist runs out of salt, they don’t expect it to magically appear out of thin air so they can make their next meal, but when it comes to believing Muhammad flying on a winged horse, they manage to turn off their ‘reason switch’. When questioned or when this is pointed out, they are likely to feel either extremely embarrassed or evade the subject. Either way, you may not be able to change the person you are debating with; however, the people listening to your debate may start thinking against unreasonable claims.

Once you start disbelieving the mythical, unreasonable stories of religion, you are likely to start a snowball effect towards rationalism and atheism.

2. Claims with Some Reason

Religious apologists sometimes use reasoning in their argument, but we can argue against this. This is slightly more complicated and can go either way depending on your knowledge on the subject. For example, Muslims love to justify the forced amputation of thieves as it is likely to reduce theft. After all, we all want to reduce crime in our society, right? Or they justify the stoning of adulterers as it avoids the infidelity of couples; after all, we all want exclusive sexual partners, right?

When debating Muslim apologists, as frustrating as it may be, it is easier when you narrow down the simple techniques they use. Below are those techniques discussed in detail with examples.

UME Technique

When we debate with Muslim apologists on morality subjects – such as violence, misogyny, or the treatment of homosexuals etc. – Muslims use a simple technique that I like to call the ‘UME technique’ to assert that the other party is uneducated or misunderstood, and when all else fails, they will evade.

Given the basic techniques Muslims use, understanding how to counter their argument can help you win a debate with a Muslim apologist. One of the most shocking things you will learn when debating with a Muslim apologist is that their arguments are centuries old and have been countered for centuries. They are highly repetitive, fallacious, and arbitrary when you go into a little detail.

When debating a Muslim apologist, you’ll notice the following techniques used by them:

1. They accuse you of being **un**educated on the subject; i.e. you have not

read the Quran.

2. They will assert that you have **misunderstood** the context or are taking it out of context.
3. When the first two claims fail, they will then **evade** the discussion at hand and will attempt to deviate you from the original point and open up some other topic.

It is mind-boggling that they frequently use the third step as it is counterintuitive to their own belief. The only way you can win the argument at the third step is by proving the contradiction in their stated view, which I will discuss shortly.

Let's tackle these points step by step and pick a certain verse on violence. If you claim that the Quran supports violence, you will immediately be accused of not having read the Quran, i.e. you are uneducated on the subject. The next step, instead of just saying, 'I have read the Quran and am quite educated on this,' you will need to back it up with examples. As mentioned earlier, the below verse is the best example of violence supported by Islam:

Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture – [fight] until they give the *jizyah* willingly while they are humbled. (9:29)

You will then be told that you have misunderstood the Quran and are likely to be told that most verses were under specific conditions, like when either the non-Muslims provoked Muslims to fight or it was an absolute necessity to attack the non-Muslims.

According to Ibn Kathir's *tafsir*, this verse was a command from Allah to fight the 'people of the book' after the pagans were defeated. This was a clear instruction for offence, and there was no defence involved in this. Check out this explanation:

Fight against those who believe not in Allah, nor in the Last Day,

nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth among the People of the Scripture. This honourable Ayah was revealed with the order to fight the People of the Book; after the pagans were defeated, the people entered Allah's religion in large numbers, and the Arabian Peninsula was secured under the Muslims' control. Allah commanded His Messenger to fight the People of the Scriptures, Jews and Christians, on the ninth year of Hijrah, and he prepared his army to fight the Romans and called the people to Jihad, announcing his intent and destination. The Messenger sent his intent to various Arab areas around Al-Madinah to gather forces, and he collected an army of thirty thousand. Some people from Al-Madinah and some hypocrites, in and around it, lagged behind, for that year was a year of drought and intense heat. The Messenger of Allah marched, heading towards Ash-Sham to fight the Romans until he reached Tabuk, where he set camp for about twenty days next to its water resources. He then prayed to Allah for a decision and went back to Al-Madinah because it was a hard year and the people were weak, as we will mention, Allah willing ⁷⁹.

After you have demonstrated that you have read the Quran and you are not misunderstanding the context, you will then be deviated from the original point either by mentioning a different contradictory verse or simply making another point, which, in their minds, will disprove your original point. For example, in this case, you will be shown this verse:

There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. (2:256)

In this case, the Muslims are actually trying to change the point. Even if we read this verse alone and ignore the explanation behind it, there are two meanings you can extract from it:

- Don't force non-Muslims to convert to Islam.
- Let people believe what they want to believe.

Yes, it does state not to force non-Muslims into conversion but says nothing about fighting them. You can also deduce that people are free to believe whatever they want to believe in. The only time you have the power to force non-Muslims into Islam is when you have conquered them. You can conquer the lands of non-Muslims and not force them to convert to Islam. Hardly a peaceful verse. You can go with either of these deductions, but it doesn't state anything about how you choose to either let or not let them believe in whatever religion they want to believe in. Obviously, you only have this choice when you have power over them. So this verse does *not* contradict the original verse we mentioned, and it is a poor attempt to deliberately misguide people. Even if we take it the way Muslims want us to take it, i.e. just leave non-Muslims alone, then it is a clear contradiction from the first verse.

In my view, the only meaning that can be deduced from this is do not forcefully convert non-Muslims into Islam (as long as they pay the non-Muslim tax) after you have conquered them. Whenever you are discussing 'violence in Islam' with Muslims, it is imperative that you point out the distinction between the Makkah chapters and Medina chapters. As explained earlier, Makkah chapters only encourage patience and non-physical aggression, but when you go to Medina, the warlike mentality becomes evident. As explained earlier in the case of abrogation of verses, the Medina verses came later, so the violent Medina verses take precedence over less violent verses of Makkah.

Now that we have covered violence, let's cover misogyny as it is an open-and-shut case when it comes to the Quran degrading women. Once you say Islam promotes misogyny, you will be accused of being uneducated about Islam and that you have not read the Quran, so you can quote this verse:

Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance -

[first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed and [finally] strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand. (4:34)

This is one of the greatest tools a non-Muslim can have when it comes to debating a Muslim apologist. This verse clearly tells Muslim men to beat up their wives, albeit as a ‘last resort’, if they do not obey them. After you quote this verse, you will be told you have misunderstood the context, to which you can respond that there is no context in which a woman should be beaten up. This will provoke a response from a Muslim, which might make them uneasy. They will ask you questions like these:

- ‘What if you found out your wife was having an affair?’
- ‘What if you found out your sister is sleeping with someone outside of wedlock?’

Although Muslims in the West would be too embarrassed to pose these questions to you, a Muslim scholar who lives in a Muslim country is likely to ask these questions. I am sure you can give the same answer that you gave in response to the context claim, i.e. ‘Under no circumstances, should a woman be beaten!’ Besides, if it was adultery, then Allah has already told us what to do, i.e. stone them (if they were married) or lash them (if they were not married to anyone), so this beating is for other trivial matters, such as disobedience.

You might think that this should end the debate, but Muslims never let go of the third step in their defence of Islam. They will still try to deviate you from the original point using hadiths like the one below:

A man came to the Prophet and said, ‘O Messenger of God! Who among the people is the most worthy of my good companionship?’ The Prophet said, ‘Your mother.’ The man said, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet said, ‘Then your mother.’ The man further asked, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet said, ‘Then your mother.’ The man asked again, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet said, ‘Then your father.’ (Bukhari,

Muslim)

All this hadith says is that a mother's status is three times higher than that of your father – again, a terrible attempt to change the original point. They may use some other hadiths or verses from the Quran and claim women have been given special rights that Christianity or Judaism don't give. They will say, 'If Islam is so bad towards Muslims, then how come our dear prophet gave such importance to women?'

First, giving more rights to a mother has nothing to do with allowing a husband to beat up his wife. Second, even if we go by the claim that Islam gives more rights to women than Christianity or Judaism, that is still not good enough as our modern society has definitely been able to give more rights to women than any of these religions. If mere mortal humans could come up with a society where women are given more rights than Islam or Christianity, then why could Allah, the creator of everything, not?

3. Unfalsifiable Claims

Now that we have addressed claims without reason and claims with some reason, all we have left are 'unfalsifiable claims'. Unfalsifiable claims are those that cannot be disproved under any circumstances. For example, if I said we are living inside an advanced alien's computer program and that we were created by this programmer with all the memories implanted in our brains a few seconds ago, no matter what counter-argument you come up with, you would never be able to falsify my original claim. I am obviously not the first one to say this, and there are various videos available online where you can see how people try to falsify it, but it can never be falsified.

On the other hand, in science, the only theories that are given any respect are the ones that can be falsified – for example, the theory of evolution, which can be easily falsified by finding a single out-of-place fossil in a geological timeline. If you could find a monkey fossil in the era of dinosaurs, then you would be able to disrupt the theory, and it would falsify the claim of evolution. However, no one has ever been able to achieve that. Whether we

look at the dinosaurs or reptiles or mammals, we can observe slow gradual change within species, and these changes over time become so big that we get a new species. If we can find a chimpanzee or any other great ape-like fossil in a Paleogene period – say, thirty million years ago – this would destroy the theory of evolution. But instead, we see a gradual change from monkeys to apes and then humans. The God claim is an unfalsifiable claim because there is no way to falsify it. Unfortunately, simply saying it is an unfalsifiable and therefore not a valid claim is not enough to shut down the God believers. Let's look at some of the techniques employed by religious people in defence of God.

[GOL technique](#)

When questioning the purpose of religion, you are told it is a test and God's goal is to see you succeed. When you question this claim with basic arguments, you are met with the below technique:

- God works in mysterious ways.
- Only God knows the answer to that.
- You can't use logic to find the answer as God is outside of human wisdom.

Life being a test doesn't make any sense as this only shows the psychopathic nature of God. Whenever we question it, we are given this terrible analogy of a teacher-student test scenario, and it goes something like this:

Just like a teacher tests you to prepare you for the real world out there, Allah is testing you in this world to prepare you for the next world.

Last I checked, people have a choice to either pass or fail a test, but what choice does a little 2-year-old child in a poor African country has who starved to death? They didn't even get to make the choice to live a life. He deliberately puts humans on Earth and causes needless suffering and pain, such as children dying of starvation and people dying in hurricanes and earthquakes and other natural disasters, for some sort of cosmic game show.

We never chose to be a part of this test, and there is no evidence of God being real (if God is so hell-bent on testing the little humans, he could have done a better job in revealing himself).

The God claim is full of contradiction and logical fallacies that just don't make sense, so we should all just throw it away and start living a better life without an imaginary judge sitting on his throne in the sky judging us all the time.

Circular Logic

When discussing the authenticity of Islam ontologically, Muslims use circular logic. The fallacy of circular reasoning occurs when the conclusion of an argument is effectively the same as the premise of the argument.

Let's pick the free will argument. This argument goes something like this:

Allah has given you free will to choose from right and wrong or good and evil [premise]; hence, you have a choice to do what you do [conclusion].

To support this, they will give you a verse like this:

We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness? (41:53)

To destroy the claim of free will, you can quote a verse like this:

Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their vision is a veil. And for them is a great punishment. (2:7)

The first verse says that Allah will show them (unbelievers) signs of his existence until they start believing.

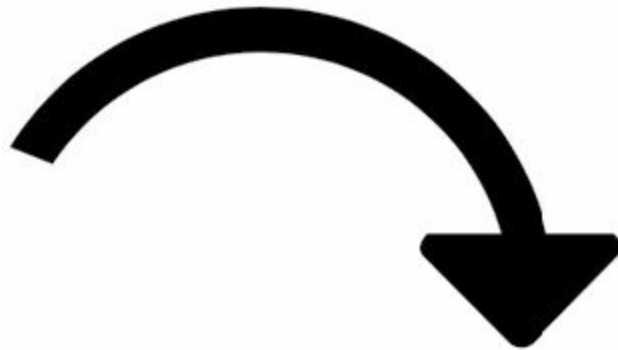
In the second verse Allah is saying that no matter how much 'evidence' these atheists are given, they will not turn to belief because Allah has put a seal of

disbelief on the hearts of these non-believers, blocking their ears and blinding them. The question is if God has already blinded me from reality and put a seal of disbelief on my heart, how can I see these 'signs'? This massive contradiction reminds me of Sir Fulke Greville's quote from the poem 'Mustapha':

Created sick, commanded to be sound [123](#)

The second verse contradicts the 'God has given you free will' argument because if he has already deliberately made me a disbeliever, how can he expect me to believe? Any reasonable person would accept there is a discrepancy, but Muslims will still find something to go around this verse that they themselves want to follow. This is where you reach a dead end in what we call circular reasoning.

Allah has given you free will, as per 41:53.



How can I believe if I can't lift this block? Allah has blocked my free will, as per 2:7.



But if you believe, you can lift this block.

‘What-about-ism’

This is another technique that not only religious apologists but also people who run out of solid material to support their claim use. If you mention violence in the Quran, the Muslim apologist would quickly say, ‘What about the Old Testament? That also supports violence!’ The same goes for misogyny, homophobia, the treatment of apostates, etc. ‘What about them?’ This is a terrible technique, and you can counter this by quoting the age-old golden principle: that two wrongs don’t make a right.

Personal Beliefs Are Sacred

When religious apologists can’t defend their views philosophically, they play the ‘offensive’ card, i.e. ‘You cannot question my personal beliefs, and questioning them is highly offensive’. I have always said ridiculous ideas deserve ridicule. Harmless, irrational beliefs can lead to other harmful, irrational beliefs as mentioned earlier in the case of my late Catholic mother-in-law. If Catholic politicians didn’t believe that life is so sacred that you shouldn’t be able to end it on your own terms, my mother-in-law would not have suffered in the last few months of her life. Prof Pervez Hoodbhoy, a notable Pakistani physicist (and probably a closet atheist), said in his interview that the head of the biology department (he didn’t name him) of Pakistan’s LUMS University believes reciting Surah-Rehman daily will keep you cancer free. This is a serious academic holding a superstitious belief that those who get cancer deserve it because they don’t recite the Quran enough. I

wish Professor Hoodbhoy had named him so we could openly ridicule him. Ridiculing the absurd beliefs of people is one way to change those beliefs in the masses; as offensive and intolerant as it may seem, criticising and ridiculing the idea of Muhammad's flying horse gets a fence-sitting Muslim to start questioning it. Mehdi Hassan, a renowned Muslim TV personality, was asked by Richard Dawkins if he believed in Muhammad's flying horse, and he said yes. All his intelligence and wit disappeared the moment he uttered those words, and I (who once thought this guy was very intelligent) stopped taking him seriously afterwards. It was evident Hassan was embarrassed to admit it, and he had no way of justifying his position, yet he couldn't deny it as it is one of the core beliefs of Islam.

There is nothing more sacred than the freedom of speech in a free society. The religious apologists claim that freedom of speech is not freedom to offend, to which ex-Muslim Ali A. Rizvi said there is no freedom of speech without freedom to offend. Whenever you feel the need to say something that is against the status quo, it is going to offend someone. Otherwise, if you are going to say something that is already accepted in society, you don't need freedom of speech; you can just say it, and no one will stop you.

When a person believes in the flying horse of Muhammad, they are likely to believe in other irrational beliefs as well. I wouldn't be surprised if a Muslim came to me and said they met a ghost last night and had a chat with it, or they believe that their neighbour has cast a spell on them. I would be surprised if an atheist says it because an atheist is not someone who lives their life on irrational beliefs.

Common Excuses

When everything else fails, you are likely to encounter these commonly used excuses by religious apologists. These are pretty basic, and a less experienced theist is more likely to use them:

- It is a translation issue (Earth is not flat; it's round).
- That's how things were back then (marrying multiple women and

having sex slaves).

- It is not for us to know (Who created God?).
- It's a metaphor (such as the open-heart surgery of Muhammad).
- It makes sense if you have faith (why there are millions of kids dying of starvation).

Final Word

Sometimes religion seems harmless and even good for humanity, but you only need to scratch the surface to see its toxic and evil nature. Religions claim that, if followed exactly as per the teachings, they bring out the good in humans, while the reality is totally different. If we were to follow Muhammad's Islam and his life as an example, we would own slaves and sex slaves, wage wars on infidels and political opponents, treat women as sexual objects, kill adulterers and homosexuals, and believe in irrational claims such as flying horses etc.

It is about time us non-believing infidels raise our voice and unite in our fight against the irrationality, barbarity, and superstition propagated by religions. We are given various derogatory terms like *racist*, *Islamophobe*, and *bigot*, but this shouldn't stop us as anyone who stands in the way of the status quo is always met with opposition like this. The threat of violence is not enough to stop us; the best they can do is to physically attack us and bestow us with untrue labels.

The world is polarised now more than ever, especially the Muslim world, and we are seeing a clear divide between the religious right and secular left. Protests in Iran and now Yemen are a clear reflection of this claim. My own country of birth, Pakistan, is becoming more polarised. We have violent, loudmouthed religious nutjobs demanding Sharia law more aggressively than ever, and we have the secularist left, who are starting to secularise the country even more. Pakistan has been playing this double game of mixing democracy and secular values with Islam and is now getting caught in the crossfire. Sooner or later, we'll see this rift between the religious right and secularist left gain momentum. Never in history have we had so many people in Pakistan demanding Sharia law, but never before in history have we had a secularist, humanist, and atheist population reach four million. You may think four million is a small number compared to over 190 million Muslims,

but most of these Muslims don't know Islam and don't really want Sharia. Religions have gotten away with shutting critics down for far too long; they have exiled and murdered us for criticising religions in the subtlest of ways. This is how they have survived for so long, but unfortunately for them, this hold is weakening, and people like me are coming out in droves.

We do not have to sink to their level – they have killed people like us for thousands of years – and we don't have to force our views on the religious zealots through violence; however, we must raise our voices to educate the ignorant religious. They may have guns, but we have words, words that can help create a better world tomorrow, words that will end the needless suffering of people across the globe. Most Muslims don't know the true Islam; the same goes for Christians and other religions. Education and counter-arguments are the only ways to eradicate the psychological disease called religion. My fellow ex-Muslims living in Western worlds, you have a great responsibility to fight for your fellow ex-Muslims living in oppressive Muslim societies. They yearn for the freedom of a free society that we take for granted. We may never be able to disprove the vague deistic God; however, we have disproven the gods of all known religions beyond all doubt. They have misogynistic, homophobic, racist, and fascist ideologies; any sane person would oppose these ideologies. We need to guide our brothers and sisters out from under the cloud of ignorance and show them the beauty and morality that a world without religions can bring.

Will you help us?

How can you help?

Join me in the discussion on the below social media platform:

Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/exMuslim>

Twitter: @XMuslimAtheist

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/exmuslimatheist666>

YouTube: <http://videos.exmuslimatheist.com>

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